Quake rocks Luzon

An earthquake with a magnitude of 5.5 jolted Luzon at 7:04 last night. The quake was centered 50 km west-southwest of Batangas and about 125 km south-southwest of Manila, the US Geological Survey said.

■ BUSINESS / B1

Peso rallies to 51.38 against $1, highest level in more than 3 years

■ ACROSS / A14

Red leader in coup plot arrest list already in jail for one year

■ NEWS / A3

No charges filed vs Peping Cojuangco, Boy Saycon but they're not off the hook

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Thursday, March 2, 2006 ★★ 5 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 84 P18 website: www.inq7.net

Media still have to follow guidelines even if 1017 lifted

MALACAÑANG PLANS TO MEET WITH NEWSPAPER, radio and TV organizations on Friday and Saturday to work out guidelines on media coverage under a state of national emergency amid mounting concern over the threat posed by Presidential Proclamation No. 1017 to press freedom.

Malacañang expects the print and electronic media to follow the guidelines even after the state of national emergency had been lifted, according

MEDIA/ A4

Gonzalez to Joker: You've more experience with edicts

By Christine Avendaño and Armand Nocum

GUNI-GUNI
LANG DAW...
PROMISE, HA?

AS FAR AS JUSTICE SECRETARY Raul Gonzalez is concerned, Sen. Joker Arroyo has an overactive imagination.

Besides, according to an annoyed Gonzalez, the

GONZALEZ/ A6

Senate report: GMA accountable for P728-M fertilizer scam

By TJ Burgonio

WITH EVIDENCE INDICATING that she had knowledge of the fund releases and benefited from them, President Macapagal-Arroyo should be "held accountable" for the mismanagement of the P728-million fertilizer fund.

The Senate committee on agriculture, together with the blue ribbon committee, yesterday made this conclusion after conducting six hearings on what it called a "premeditated, systematic and agricultural theft."

The fund, originally meant for the purchase of farm inputs, was believed to have been diverted and distributed as largesse to allies of the administration to ensure Ms Arroyo's victory in the May 2004 presidential election.

"The President must be held accountable for the whole project because she was the one who assigned [Jocelyn "Joc-joc"] Bolante. It's the office of the DBM (Department of Budget and Management) under her who made the releases. So it's at the front door of Malacañang," Sen. Ramon Magsaysay, chair of the agriculture committee, said.

Magsaysay stopped short of recommending the filing of charges against the President.

"We're not asking that any cases be filed against the President. We're saying she's held accountable," he told reporters in an ambush interview.

Bolante was an agriculture undersecretary when the funds were released just before the 2004 elections.

The agriculture and blue ribbon committees also recommended the filing of criminal and administrative charges against Bolante, the alleged chief architect of the fund; former Agriculture Secretary Luis Lorenzo; former Undersecretary Ibarra Poliquit; Undersecretary Belinda Gonzales and Assistant Secretary Jose Felix Montes and all regional directors of the Department of Agriculture who

SENATE/ A6

Death for ex-lawmaker

6 others convicted for Quintos murders

By DJ Yap and Cyril L. Bonabente
PDI Research

FORMER REP. JOSE VILLAROSA and the "Mamburao Six" farmers were sentenced to death yesterday for murdering two brothers over a political and land dispute in Occidental Mindoro, capping one of the most sensational cases of 1997.

After eight years of legal battle, a Quezon City court found Villarosa and the farmers guilty of killing Michael and Paul Quintos, sons of Villarosa's political rival Ricardo Quintos.

All seven accused were meted out the death penalty and ordered to pay the victims' heirs P200,000 in indemnity and moral damages, and P279,845 in actual damages by Judge Ma. Theresa Yadao of the Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 81.

Quintos said he was glad that the "truth has finally come out."

He added "it's a pity that many lives were lost."

In an 86-page decision, the longest she ever penned, Yadao said she found sufficient evidence that the accused conspired to kill

DEATH/ A6

RAFFY LERMA

DESTINATION: MUNTINLUPA. After eight years of legal battle, the Quintos brothers' sensational murder case ends in a guilty verdict for former Rep. Jose Villarosa (right, in brown shirt) and six farmers, the so-called "Mamburao 6." They were taken to the National Bilibid Prison.

Erap admits giving P8M to Rangers, Marines, Magdalo kin

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Norman Bordadora

DEPOSED PRESIDENT JOSEPH Estrada has admitted giving a total of P8 million to soldiers belonging to the Scout Ranger Regiment, the Philippine Marines and the families of Magdalo soldiers in December last year—not to fund a coup d'etat but to add cheer to their Christmas.

This was revealed yesterday by Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor who said Estrada made the admission during a visit by him to the former President's Tanay resthouse two weeks before the coup attempt the government claims to have aborted on Friday last week.

Estrada himself confirmed the donations in telephone interviews with the INQUIRER, saying the donations were made in good faith and in a transparent manner.

Defensor told the INQUIRER that he confronted Estrada about reports he was financing military rebels during his visit with the deposed leader, who is under house arrest pending trial on plunder charges.

"I told him that we have reports that he was funding the military for an impending coup d'etat," Defensor said. "But he told me this was not true."

Defensor said that based on Estrada's account, representatives of the Scout Rangers, the Marines and families of the jailed Magdalo

ERAP ADMITS/ A4

GMA sets terms for lifting emergency edict

By Christine O. Avendaño

DESPITE THE LOUD CLAMOR for President Macapagal-Arroyo to end the state of national emergency, any decision on the matter is not immediately forthcoming.

Addressing the nation yesterday over government TV/radio, Ms Arroyo said she would lift the controversial Presidential Proclamation No. 1017 only if she were "satisfied" that the government had "control of the situation."

She said she had given her officials 24-72 hours to conduct an assessment.

Ms Arroyo said she wanted to lift PP 1017 "as soon as possible" because of the government's determination "to get back to its core mission: to strengthen our economy, eliminate poverty and focus on the people's business."

"I am asking for three reports to be submitted to me within 24 to 72 hours in order to assess the situation," she said, adding that these would come from Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz and Philippine National Police Director General Arturo Lomibao.

Gonzalez was assigned to assess supposed destabilization efforts; Cruz, military control; and Lomibao, domestic peace and order.

"I will lift the state of emergency when I am satisfied that each official can assure me that we have control of the situation," Ms Arroyo said.

"The government acted to ensure the domestic safety of the republic, and I will lift the state of emergency as soon as the criteria are met," she said.

But Gonzalez said he was not inclined to recommend the lifting of PP 1017.

At a news briefing called minutes after the President's address, Gonzalez cited what he called "loose ends," such as the Time magazine report indicating that

GMA/ A6

ConCom member hits Cha-Cha

By Norman Bordadora

A MEMBER OF THE CONSULTATIVE Commission has "dissociated" himself from the group formed by President Macapagal-Arroyo to draft a revised Constitution, an e-mail that reached the INQUIRER showed.

Former Trade Secretary and ex-Sen. Vicente Paterno said in his e-mailed message that the ConCom draft and its transitory provisions being discussed in the House of Representatives convinced him that the proposed Charter revision is meant not "only to retain her presidency but to expand her [President's] powers."

"(These provisions) should by

CONCOM/ A4

RYAN ROSAURO/PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

A 'LEGEND' IN TEARS: Col. Ariel Querubin, commandant of the 1st Marine Brigade based in Marawi City, bids his men goodbye after the formal turnover rites of his command to Lt. Col. Luisito Marcelino.

Battle-scarred Marines teary-eyed as chief goes

By Fe Zamora and Ryan Rosauro
PDI Mindanao Bureau

CAMPO RANAO, MARAWI CITY—COL. ARIEL QUERUBIN WAS IN tears yesterday when he relinquished his post as commandant of the First Marine Brigade here, an uncertain ending to an exciting, colorful and even charmed career in the Armed Forces.

Battle-scarred sergeants unabashedly wiped their noses as they held back tears and younger, sunburned soldiers bowed their heads as Querubin hugged them.

Marine Brig. Gen. Benjamin Dolorfino, who presided at the turnover of command from Querubin to Lt. Col. Luisito Marcelino, extolled the bemedalled officer as a "legend," citing his distinguished combat record.

But Dolorfino also reminded the soldiers never to obey "illegal orders" even if it came from him.

BATTLE-SCARRED/ A4

Mike A didn't go to Marawi? Tell that to the Marines

By Fe Zamora

CAMPO RANAO, MARAWI City—Soldiers spit expletives whenever they hear claims that First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo was never here during the 2004 election to buy votes.

Once, they threw paper

MIKE A/ A4

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Northern and Eastern Luzon will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers. Eastern sections of Visayas and Mindanao will have mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy.

COMPILED BY KATE PEDROSO, PDI RESEARCH/03/01/06 SOURCE: PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

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Second FRONTPAGE

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Arrest warrant out for Gringo

DAY OF ASHES. A priest, dipping his thumb into ashes that have been previously blessed, marks the forehead of a baby with the sign of cross to signify that the Catholic faithful ought to repent of their sins during the Lenten fast which began yesterday, Ash Wednesday. EDWIN BACASMAS

By Tarra V. Quismundo

A MAKATI COURT ISSUED ARrest warrants yesterday against former Sen. Gregorio Honasan and six other people accused of conspiring with junior military officers who staged the short-lived Oakwood Mutiny in Makati nearly three years ago.

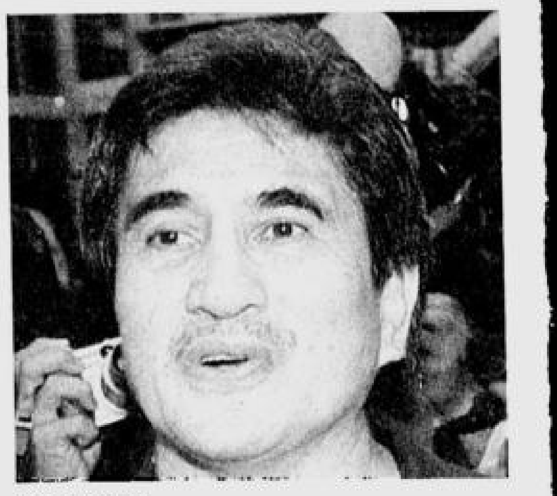
Judge Cesar Santamaria of the Makati Regional Trial Court issued the warrants five days after the Department of Justice filed coup d'etat charges against Honasan and the others. He also scheduled a hearing on Friday of a DOJ motion to consolidate their case into the ongoing trial of the Oakwood mutineers known also as the Magdalo group.

The charge of coup d'etat is not bailable.

Sought to be arrested besides Honasan, leader of various failed coup attempts against President Corazon Aquino, were four retired military officers – Colonels Ernesto Macahiya, Virgilio Briones and Romeo Lazo and Capt.Felix Turingan – and two members of Honasan's staff at the Senate identified as George Duldulao and Lina Reyes.

The retired officers were identified as members of the Philippine Guardians Brotherhood Inc., a fraternity of active and retired military and police officials founded by Honasan.

The arrest order against Honasan said that the former senator, described by the charge sheet as "kuya" or big brother to the Oakwood mutineers, may be arrested at his address at No. 1 President Marcos Street, Industrial Valley Subdivision, Marikina City, "or elsewhere."



HONASAN

The coup d'etat charges against him and the six others were filed by the DOJ just a few hours after President Macapagal-Arroyo declared a state of national emergency last Friday. The DOJ said it had conducted a preliminary investigation that established probable cause to take them to trial for their role in the July 27 takeover by mutinous soldiers of the Oakwood Premier apartment-hotel in Makati City.

In response to a request the Philippine National Police filed Monday, Judge Santamaria also issued an order informing the PNP's Detection and Special Operations Division that an arrest warrant has been issued against Honasan.

Honasan was on a list of 12 personalities about whom the PNP had requested a court verification of pending warrants. The list included party-list members of the House of Representatives who are currently under the chamber's protective custody, and other leaders of leftist organizations.

SHOOTING OF PINOYS

DFA summons Saudi envoy

WERE THEY REALLY CAUGHT IN A crossfire or mistaken for terrorists?

Varying accounts of the deaths of two overseas Filipinos workers and the wounding of three others in a shooting incident involving Saudi police on Monday prompted the Department of Foreign Affairs to call the Saudi ambassador to a meeting yesterday.

Ambassador Mohammed Ameen Mohammed Wali has assured Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo that the Saudi government will conduct "a close inquiry on the circumstance of the police operation" and share the findings with Manila, the department said.

An official report from the Philippine embassy in Riyadh said the company vehicle carrying the Filipinos was "caught in a shooting incident" between Saudi police and a militant group on the morning of Feb. 27 at the Rawda District.

But Arab news agencies, as well as the ABS-CBN Middle East bureau, reported the incident as a case of mistaken police targets.

Arabnews.com said the security forces "opened fire" on the victims' four-door pickup which "they believed was carrying terrorists." It further described the shootings as a security check "that went awry."

The DFA on Tuesday confirmed the deaths of Abel Monterela and Felix Llorando, who succumbed to gunshot wounds while undergoing treatment at the Riyadh Medical Center – Shimeisy Hospital.

The three other Filipinos were taken to the King Fahd National Guard Hospital. They were identified as Rodel Canlas Miranda, Salvador Traquena Bibon, 34, and Jimmy Mayo Pactor, 36.

The Filipinos, employed by Bader Al Soubo Construction Co., were in their service vehicle on their way to their job site when the shooting took place at Exit 9, Al Waha Compound, the DFA added.

More protest rallies defy GMA order

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

PROTESTERS, MOSTLY MILITANTS AND students, yesterday marched to the Edsa Shrine in open defiance of Presidential Proclamation No. 1017 which banned street protests and vowed to stage more rallies until the controversial proclamation was lifted.

"We will assert our hard-won right to peaceful assembly and free speech. In the coming days, militant groups together with middle forces and human rights advocates will lead daily protest actions," the militant group Sanlakas said in a statement.

Former Vice President Teofisto Guingona said he would support future protests challenging PP 1017 which declared a state of emergency nationwide.

"What the students and the faculty of the University of the Philippines did is already being replicated in other schools," Guingona also said.

On Tuesday, students and faculty members of UP walked out of their classes in protest of PP 1017 and urged other schools to do the same until the state of emergency is lifted.

Yesterday, about 1,000 protesters marched to the Our Lady Queen of Peace Chapel on Edsa corner Ortigas Avenue but were blocked by anti-riot policemen.

Four days before, a bigger group held a two-hour rally against Ms Arroyo at the Edsa Shrine on Friday.

Rally organizers estimated the crowd at 3,000.

"Tonight, we come together to continue reaffirming our call to (Ms Arroyo) to make the supreme sacrifice and to resign voluntarily," the mass organizers said in a leaflet.

The protesters first gathered in front of the Greenhills Shopping Center in San Juan before Guingona, former social welfare secretary Dinky Soliman and party list representatives led them in marching to the Edsa Shrine.

The protesters arrived at the shrine before 5:30 p.m. but were not allowed to step on the vicinity of the church by about a hundred policemen.

Tension rose when the protesters started pushing the lines of policemen. But they were pacified when their leaders were allowed to enter the chapel and attend the ongoing mass briefly.

NOTICE TO SHAREHOLDERS OF KEPPEL PHILIPPINES MARINE, INC.

All holders of shares of common stock of Keppel Philippines Marine, Inc. (respectively, the "Shareholders" and "KPM") are hereby notified that on 27 February 2006, KS Investments Pte. Ltd. ("the Bidder") filed a Tender Offer Report (SEC Form 19-1) with the Securities and Exchange Commission ("SEC") and the Philippine Stock Exchange ("PSE") pursuant to Section 19 of the Securities Regulation Code. The Bidder, which is a corporation duly organized and existing under and by virtue of the laws of the Republic of Singapore, intends to acquire 70.529% or 1,406,665,058 common shares of KPM.

The Tender Offer shall commence at 10:00 a.m. on 1 March 2006, and end at 4:00 p.m. on 28 March 2006 (the "Tender Offer Period"). Common shares of KPM to be tendered (the "Subject Shares"), if any, are intended to be crossed on the Philippine Stock Exchange ("PSE") on 6 April 2006 (the "Cross Date") subject to PSE approval. Should any of the business days during the period from 1 March 2006, the commencement of the Tender Offer Period and 6 April 2006, the Cross Date, inclusive, be officially declared a non-working holiday after the filing of the Tender Offer Report (SEC Form 19-1) on 27 February 2006, the period shall be extended by the number of business days corresponding to those which were declared as non-working holidays.

The purchase price for the acquisition of the Subject Shares is Php 1.00 for each share (the "Tender Offer Price"). Payments shall be in Philippine Pesos and in the form of manager's checks drawn against ATR-Kim Eng Securities, Inc. (the "Paying Agent"). ATR Kim Eng Capital Partners, Inc., the Financial Adviser to the Bidder, has certified that the Bidder has sufficient resources, including cash, to satisfy full acceptance of the Tender Offer. The Bidder has allocated Php1,406,665,058 in cash for this purpose. The Bidder intends to pay the tendered and accepted Subject Shares on the 10th trading day after the close of the Tender Offer Period. Payments for the tendered and accepted Subject Shares shall be made available by the Paying Agent for pick up by the tendering Shareholders after 9:00 a.m. on 11 April 2006 assuming the shares are crossed on the Cross Date.

Every Shareholder of KPM who holds stock certificates ("Scrip Shareholders") should submit within the Tender Offer Period their duly endorsed stock certificates and the duly accomplished Application together with the following requirements to ATR-Kim Eng Securities, Inc. (the "Depository"), 17th Floor, Tower One & Exchange Plaza, Ayala Avenue, Makati City, Telephone No. (63-2) 849-8888 (Contact Person: Nilaida S. Enriquez):

If you are a CORPORATE SHAREHOLDER,
please submit the following:

1. Certified true copies of the Articles of Incorporation and By-laws of the shareholder and latest amendment/s thereof.
2. A notarized Secretary's Certificate substantially in the form prescribed by the Bidder setting forth resolutions of the tendering shareholder's Board of Directors authorizing the tender and sale of the Company's Subject Shares and designating the signatories for the purpose.
3. A duly accomplished signature card containing the specimen signatures of its authorized signatories validated by the Corporate Secretary and verified by its broker (the name of the broker and the broker's signatory must be specified) or officer of the bank (the name of the bank and the bank's officer must be specified) where it is maintaining an account.

If you are an INDIVIDUAL SHAREHOLDER,
please submit the following:

1. Two (2) valid identification cards containing the photo and specimen signature of the shareholder.
2. For shareholders acting through an attorney-in-fact, a duly notarized Special Power of Attorney substantially in the form prescribed by the Bidder (*N.B.* Endorsement of stock certificate/s must be made by the shareholder himself).
3. A duly accomplished signature card containing the specimen signature of the shareholder and verified by his broker (the name of the broker and the broker's signatory must be specified) or officer of the bank (the name of the bank and the bank's officer must be specified) where he is maintaining an account.

For the convenience of Scrip Shareholders based in Visayas and Mindanao, the Subject Shares may be tendered by submitting the foregoing requirements at the Cebu and Davao branch offices of the Depository no later than 21 March 2006.

ATR-Kim Eng Securities, Inc. (Cebu Branch)
Room 206, Cebu Holdings Center
Cebu Business Park, Cebu City
Telephone No.: (63)(32) 231-1324
Contact Person: Cheryl M. Lim-Go

ATR-Kim Eng Securities, Inc. (Davao Branch)
Dr. #7 M.T. Aquino Building, Cabaguio Avenue
corner Bolcan Street, Davao City
Telephone No.: (63)(82) 224-2860
Contact Person: Miguel Luis R. Aquino

After said dates, Scrip Shareholders in Visayas and Mindanao may tender their respective Subject Shares only with the Depository's head office in Makati City.

The Depository will submit the share certificates for validation to KPM's Stock Transfer Agent, Securities Transfer Services, Inc., c/o Mr. Antonio R. Galvez, 4th floor Benpres Building, Exchange Road corner Meralco Avenue, Ortigas Center, Pasig City, tel. (632) 449-6155 or (632) 449-6168. Defective applications (*e.g.*, with discrepancy between the specimen signatures on file and the endorsement) must be corrected within the Tender Offer Period to avoid being rejected by the Bidder. Hence, Shareholders are strongly urged against tendering at the last minute to allow sufficient time to correct any deficiency in their application. Shareholders are also urged to indicate their telephone numbers in their respective application forms to allow the Depository to inform them immediately of any deficiency in their applications.

Tendering Shareholders whose shares are lodged with the Philippine Central Depository Nominee Corporation ("PCD") ("Scripless Shareholders") should instruct their brokers to electronically transfer their shares to ATR-Kim Eng Securities, Inc. (the "Broker") for receipt by the Broker prior to 4:00 p.m. of March 28, 2006. The Broker shall hold the tendered common shares only as custodian for said shares. Tendering Shareholders shall have the right to withdraw any tendered shares at any time during the Tender Offer Period. For a withdrawal to be effective, a written notice of withdrawal must be received by the Depository (for Scrip Shareholders) or by the Broker (for Scripless Shareholders) before 4:00 p.m. of March 28, 2006.

Copies of SEC Form 19-1 may be obtained by Shareholders from the Depository/Broker at their addresses stated above. For inquiries about the Bidder or the Tender Offer, please contact Ms. Nilaida Enriquez of the Depository at its address set forth earlier in this letter.

(PDI–March 1, 2 & 3, 2006)

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Lomibao: No plot in Peping's house

By Philip C. Tubeza

COJUANGCO

THERE WAS NO "CONSPIRATORIAL" MEETING at the house of Jose "Peping" Cojuangco on the eve of the alleged coup attempt against President Macapagal-Arroyo, PNP Director General Arturo Lomibao said yesterday.

Lomibao said that Cojuangco and Pastor "Boy" Saycon were not yet being investigated although Saycon admitted to the PNP chief that he called Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim, alleged to have been involved in the suspected coup plot, that night.

Lomibao said his evaluation of the gathering at the Cojuangco residence was that it "was not conspiratorial."

"There's no custodial investigation going on. I think they were requested by the authorities to just explain," Lomibao told reporters during a break at the PNP budget hearing in the Senate.

"And I think we will not proceed against them because [according] to my evaluation, I think there's nothing really conspiratorial [about the meeting]," he said.

Malacañang earlier ordered an investigation of Cojuangco and Saycon after the international weekly news magazine Time reported that one of its reporters, Nelly Sindayen, had witnessed a meeting at Cojuangco's home last Thursday in which a possible coup plot had been discussed.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said he had ordered the National Bureau of Investigation to invite Sindayen so she could provide the details about the supposed meeting "where a possible plan for withdrawal of support from President Arroyo was being discussed."

Time article

The Time article said that more than a dozen middle-level politicians and businessmen were going in and out of the meeting.

It also said that Saycon had spoken over a speaker phone to a Washington official and to Lim, who is now in military custody after informing Armed Forces Chief Gen. Generoso Senga that he and other officials were going to withdraw support from Ms Arroyo.

Gonzalez said he has yet to confirm a report that Sindayen had been advised by her lawyer not to report to the NBI.

Cojuangco, head of the Philippine Olympic Committee, is a younger brother of former President Aquino who has called for the President to step down.

Cojuangco and Saycon denied having helped Lim to plot the ouster of Ms Arroyo.

Cojuangco said the meeting in his house was about finalizing plans for the Edsa anniversary celebration. Saycon attended the meeting as a member of the Edsa commission.

Not off the hook

Gonzalez said Saycon and Cojuangco were not yet off the hook even if they denied the story.

"Everybody knows that a disclaimer is like alibi. It's the weakest of all defenses," said Gonzalez, who joined the weekly news conference of Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita in Malacañang.

But while the Time story was itself evidence, it needed to be supported by other evidence, especially since Cojuangco and Saycon have denied the story, said Gonzalez.

The fact that the article mentioned the presence of businessmen in the meeting was important because they could be the "financial supporters of the coup," he said.

Ermita said that Saycon had called him and even wrote him a letter to deny the Time article and "explained circumstances that led to the meeting in the house of Cojuangco."

Asked whether he was convinced, Ermita said it would be best to wait for the results of Gonzalez's investigation.

But he noted that since Saycon had had previous involvement in such coup talks, it was even more necessary to investigate the present case.

Cojuangco's wife, Margarita "Tingting" Cojuangco, yesterday denied that those who went to her house on the night of Feb. 23 were hatching a coup.

'No conspiracy'

"There was no conspiracy in my home. They can arrest Boy Saycon but not my husband," said Tingting, who was at the Senate to attend the budget hearings of the Department of Interior and Local Government.

"I cannot control what my guests, invited or uninvited, say in my house. But why my husband? Boy is on his own. He was the one who went to my house," she said.

She said that she was not home when the meeting occurred and only learned about it from her husband and from the Time magazine report.

"My husband is an appointee of the President so we certainly wouldn't do that... There's no truth to the allegations. In fact, my husband has been so occupied with sports we haven't attended any rallies," she said.

"But it does not mean to say that we don't have friends visiting us. And whatever they say, we can't control their mouths," she added.

Tingting said she welcomed the investigation so that she and her husband can clear their names.

"We have nothing to be worried about and I'm grateful to the President for putting me in my position and recognizing that a woman can do a man's job," she said. Tingting is president of the Philippine Public Safety College (PPSC).

She said she and her husband continued to support Ms Arroyo although her sister-in-law had asked for the President's resignation.

"We haven't spoken to (Mrs. Aquino). That's her point of view," she said. *With a report from Christine Avendaño*

Proclamation 1017 reunites divided Church

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO'S state of emergency declaration may just have the effect of unifying Church-based organizations and religious organizations previously divided over the unresolved political crisis.

With the declaration and the allegedly "warrantless arrests and detention and the gag order on the media," Church people would not find it difficult to unite, said Sister Cresencia Lucero, executive director of the Task Force Detainees of the Philippines.

"We will defy 1017 by going out in the streets," Lucero said at a forum at St. Joseph's College in Quezon City yesterday which tackled Proclamation No. 1017 and its implications for Philippine democracy.

It was attended by representatives from the Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines (AMRSP) and ecumenical movements Sinag and Kaalagad—all agreed that the proclamation was an affront to civil liberties.

Lucero said members of the institutional church and congregations had been clearly divided on how to best deal with allegations that Ms Arroyo had stolen the 2004 elections.

When the AMRSP came out with a statement calling on Ms Arroyo to resign last year, it met with opposition from other member congregations which said they had not been properly consulted on the decision.

The same division was manifested among Catholic bishops last year, with some being vocal in their opposition to the President but many more largely silent about the political crisis.

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Mild quake jolts RP

AN EARTHQUAKE jolted Metro Manila last night but there were no immediate reports of damage or injuries.

The Hong Kong Observatory recorded a magnitude 5.7 quake in Manila at 19:07 (1107 GMT), said Woo Wang-chun, a science officer at the observatory. No exact location of the epicenter was immediately given.

Renato Solidum, director of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology, said the location and the magnitude could not immediately be determined because heavy rains at the time hampered satellite transmissions.

"So far we have no report of any significant incidents in other places," he said in a radio interview.

He said the tremor was "a bit strong" on Lubang Island, 130 kilometers southwest of Manila, and also felt in several suburbs. Earthquakes felt in those areas in the past were center along the Manila Trench west of the capital, he said. *AP*

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Erap admits giving P8M to Rangers …

From page A1

soldiers went to his Tanay resthouse asking for money for their Christmas parties and gift-giving.

Solicitation letter

Defensor said Estrada agreed to give them money so long as they made it formal. "He (Estrada) asked them to give a formal letter of solicitation so that he could give the money in the form of a formal donation with proper documentation," Defensor said.

Estrada claimed to have used his Saludo sa Kawal Pilipino Foundation which he established shortly after the military's takeover of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front's Camp Abu Bakar in Mindanao to provide relief to the soldiers and their families.

Defensor said the foundation was headed by Estrada's son-in-law, Manuel "Beaver" Lopez.

Defensor said Estrada might have "unwittingly" provided financial assistance to the rebels soldiers but he would not say if the government would file charges or investigate the matter further.

On Friday, Defensor claimed that the government had received intelligence reports that Estrada had been in constant touch with the Scout Rangers' commander, Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim, several days before the allegedly aborted coup plot was to have been carried out on Feb. 24.

Malacañang claimed to have nipped in the bud a plot to overthrow the President involving a contingent of armed soldiers, mainly from the Scout Rangers and the Marines, joining a People Power commemoration rally and then announcing a military withdrawal of support from her administration.

Transparent deal

Asked for comment on Defensor's disclosure, Estrada immediately acknowledged making the donations.

"It was properly received and payment was done through checks," he said. "The whole deal was transparent and with a paper trail. If the money was meant for a revolution, it should have been in cash."

"(The soldiers) asked for help and we just gave it to them," Estrada said.

Estrada said he already explained the motive behind the donations to Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno who paid him a visit yesterday.

"We also talked about possible reconciliation between me and (President Macapagal-Arroyo). As for reports linking me to destabilization efforts, Secretary Puno knows that I'm not involved in any such thing," Estrada said.

Not the first time

Estrada said the donations last December to members of the Armed Forces were not the first.

"We've been giving donations through the foundation even before," Estrada said.

He added that the Saludo sa Kawal Pilipino Foundation was now processing a donation for hospital equipment intended for the Armed Forces' medical center on V. Luna Avenue in Quezon City.

"I'm the chairman emeritus of the foundation. I am the only one who can tell (my son-in-law) Beaver where to donate the money," Estrada said.

Estrada said that the foundation started raising funds for the benefit of the soldiers when he was still the President and continued to provide assistance "whenever soldiers ask for support because the fund is dedicated to them."

Puno, who had served as Estrada's interior and local government secretary, told the INQUIRER in a separate interview that he had heard about the donations but felt "too queasy" about bringing it up during the meeting with his former boss.

"But then he started talking about his foundation and what it has done," Puno said.

Continuing dialogue

Puno said his visit was to catch up with the former President, whom he described as a friend, and to discuss with the deposed leader his alleged involvement in destabilization attempts and possible reconciliation with Ms Arroyo.

"Of course I had to discuss with him the report linking their group to destabilization efforts. We're friends, so at least there's little room for misunderstanding when I report to (Ms Arroyo)," Puno said.

Puno said he and Estrada agreed on the need for a continuing dialogue. But the newest member of Ms Arroyo's Cabinet said he would not stand in the way should the government decide to proceed against the former President. *With a report from Nelson F. Flores*

Battle-scarred Marines teary-eyed as chief goes

From page A1

"There have been many victims of this in previous coup attempts. You should learn from many lessons in the past," said Dolorfino, who is also head of Task Force Ranao. "If I order you to march to Edsa, do not follow me," he said.

Querubin was relieved of his post Monday after a six-hour standoff at the Marine headquarters in Fort Bonifacio triggered by his protest over the relief of Marine commandant Maj. Gen. Renato Miranda.

At the height of the standoff, Querubin admitted he had planned to join Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim in a march with the people on Edsa on Feb. 24 to mark the anniversary of the People Power Revolution of 1986.

Many unfinished tasks

Trying to hold back tears, Querubin said he was sad and had "mixed feelings" about relinquishing his post which he held for only four and a half months.

"We still have so many unfinished tasks and I still have so many plans and dreams for the brigade, but like a good soldier, I have to follow orders and the chain of command," said Querubin.

Referring to Sunday's incident, he said: "I was after the need to preserve the institutional independence and integrity of our organization."

Querubin said that his fellow Marines "may not fully understand the reasons behind my relief now, but in time it shall be clear to you and I hope you will understand me by then."

Paying price for principles

He said that if his relief was "the price for standing to my principles," he was prepared to face the consequences.

"There is always a point in our career when one experiences a vacuum and finds himself not happy anymore. It is at this point when one has to make a choice of coexisting in pain or leave in order to find meaning in one's life to live by your principles," Querubin said as he broke down in tears.

Neither Dolorfino nor Querubin referred to the events over the weekend as a coup or a mutiny. Dolorfino merely referred to it as a "the turn of events in Manila."

"We are confident that Colonel Querubin will be able to clear his name from the accusations. We are looking forward that he will be able to come back and reassume his duty as brigade commander," Dolorfino said.

Marcelino was named acting brigade commander.

Dolorfino blamed "politics" for divisions in the Marines and stressed that the Marines should never be involved in activities at Edsa.

"Our mandate is to protect everybody. If you go to Edsa, you will just be protecting a segment of the population. That is not our mandate," he said.

Also present at the turnover ceremonies were Col. Ed Ducusin, commander of the 2nd Marine Brigade based in Iligan, and the commanders of four Marine battalions.

Conspicuously absent was Col. Juancho Sabban, commander of the 3rd Marine Brigade based in Jolo.

Ducusin, however, refused to give a statement, saying a "gag order" was given on Monday.

Respected officer

In his acceptance remarks, Marcelino praised his predecessor as "a very respected officer of the Marine Corps" whom the troops "will miss so much."

Holding back his emotions, Marcelino assured Querubin "we will cultivate what you have planted."

Col. Emmanuel Salamat, commanding officer of the 8th Marine Battalion, described Querubin as a "strong-willed leader and risk-taker who has very specific command guidance."

"We are really sad because we are losing a very, very good officer," lamented Salamat.

He said the Marines had no inkling of Querubin's actions in Manila, saying they learned about it on TV.

Seemingly belying Querubin's suspected involvement in the foiled coup, Salamat said: "He did not recruit us."

Aguinaldo pep talk

In Camp Aguinaldo yesterday, the Armed Forces top brass gathered 400 junior officers and enlisted personnel at a forum called "Talakayan sa campo" for a pep talk on "loyalty, military discipline and professionalism." The affair was closed to reporters.

"We will remind them that their loyalty is to the Constitution, to the chain of command and to the duly constituted authorities," said Brig. Gen. Jaime Buenaflor, chief of the AFP Civil Relations Service.

In Zamboanga City, visiting US Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill yesterday said that the political problem was an internal Philippine affair.

"It is the business of the Filipino people to resolve these issues," said Hill, who visited the US-funded Computer Literacy and Internet Program in Barangay Talisayan here. *With reports from Dona Z. Pazzibugan in Manila; Julie S. Alipala, Grace Cantal-Albasin and Franklin M. Caliguid, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

ConCom member hits Cha-Cha

From page A1

now have been opposed by Congress for downgrading the interim Parliament. But they have not. Developments leave me no doubt (Ms Arroyo) herself is pushing these provisions," Paterno said.

Motive behind Cha-cha

"I have notified members of the former ConCom that I dissociate myself from all ConCom activities and will oppose Charter change," Paterno said.

Paterno zoomed in on the ConCom's transitory provisions under Article XX, Sections 7,9 and 11 to 13.

Paterno cited Section 9 which states that Cabinet members will not be elected MPs but will be appointed by the President, and one-third of them shall become MPs only by her appointment.

Under the same section, 30 persons, presumably experts in various fields, will also be named MPs by the President to the interim parliament.

"(The ConCom) transitory provisions clearly define the strong motivation for Mrs. Arroyo's determined efforts to get Cha-cha ratified," he added.

According to Paterno's e-mail, it appears that his problem with the ConCom draft also lies with the proposed transitory provisions that mandate the cancellation of elections in 2007 and with the continued incumbency of all members of the Senate and the House of Representatives as members of parliament until 2010.

To do GMA's bidding

"The No-El provision (assures) that the interim Parliament (from 2007 to 2010) will be filled with tried and proven allies, ready to do (Ms Arroyo's) bidding," Paterno said.

He also has problems with the proposed provisions that would give Ms Arroyo the powers and privileges of both the President and the Prime Minister.

Both president, PM

"In a normal parliamentary system, the head of government is the Prime Minister.… The President's duties are ceremonial—to open Parliament, dissolve it upon advice of the Prime Minister, greet new ambassadors, be the symbol of national unity as head of state," Paterno said.

Under the ConCom's proposed Cha-cha revision, Ms Arroyo would be both President and Prime Minister upon the ratification of the new Charter in 2007 until all terms end in 2010.

Same powers as Marcos

"In my interpellation to oppose these provisions in ConCom, I asked if these were not the same powers that Marcos gave himself. (The) spontaneous answer by the sponsor of the provision Raul Lambino (was) yes," Paterno said.

He said the cochairs of the new body assigned to promote Cha-cha were the main sponsors of what he alleged to be onerous provisions—lawyers Romela Bengzon and Lambino.

Pun's advocacy

"The appointment of (erstwhile Antipolo Rep. Ronaldo Puno) to (the Department of Interior and Local Government), given his well known *dagdag-bawas* and other election distorting skills, further confirms to us that GMA will leave no stone unturned for Cha-cha … to be ratified by any means," Paterno said.

Puno, upon his assumption of the DILG portfolio, admitted that he had been pushing Charter change in the House but his new job makes such an advocacy take the back seat to issues of public safety and order.

"We are in a national emergency. To suggest that I assumed the position to push for Cha-cha shows a failure to understand the current situation," Puno said.

Only reference material

The House committee on constitutional amendments chaired by Rep. Constantino Jaraula has dropped the ConCom draft and is reportedly only using it as a "reference material."

No-El dropped

The No-El provision for senators and congressmen who'd be made members of the interim parliament has been dropped.

In its place was Article 18, Section 1 that says only senators elected in May 2004 would go on to become members of the interim parliament until 2010. All congressmen and senators whose terms will expire in 2007 would have to go through elections.

Media still have to follow guidelines …

From page A1

to Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez.

Gonzalez yesterday disclosed the Palace plan to forge a modus vivendi or feasible arrangement with the Philippine media even as more journalists here and abroad denounced what they described was an assault on press freedom under President Macapagal-Arroyo's emergency declaration.

About 100 members of the National Press Club and the Alayansa ng Pilipinong Mamahayag held a rally in front of the NPC building in Intramuros, Manila. At least 10 journalists shaved their heads to dramatize their protest over the police raid on the offices of the The Daily Tribune, a small newspaper critical of the Arroyo administration.

The Brussels-based International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) also sent a protest letter to Ms Arroyo on Wednesday, a few days after the Saturday raid as well as the deployment of troops around the compounds of the largest TV networks, ABS-CBN and GMA 7.

"The IFJ has concerns that media freedom and civil liberties are the biggest casualties of the state of emergency," Christopher Warren, the federation's president, said in the letter to Ms Arroyo.

"It is unacceptable for the government to be warning media sources to report only one side of the emergency," Warren said. According to the IFJ, it represents about 500,000 journalists worldwide.

Media guidelines

The administration's tough actions after Ms Arroyo issued PP1017 on Friday last week have also drawn criticism from the Manila-based Philippine Press Institute as well as media practitioners in Central Visayas and Bicol.

The Washington-based Radio-Television News Directors Association and New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists have also expressed alarm over the administration's attempts to impose standards on news reporting during emergency rule.

Gonzalez, however, said the guidelines on media coverage envisioned by Malacañang would be based mainly on the Code of Ethics for Journalists.

The justice secretary said the guidelines would enjoin news organizations to adhere to the principle of equal space and time for government and antigovernment sources, minimize the use of anonymous sources in stories critical of the administration, and shun interviews involving leftist and rightist elements calling for the government's overthrow.

"I believe the guidelines will be enforced through a gentleman's agreement," Gonzalez said. He refused to comment on what sanctions would be meted out to media organizations that stray from the guidelines.

Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor said various media groups would be consulted in the writing of the guidelines.

"We will appreciate it if the industry itself police its ranks because as much as possible we do not want to intervene in media operations," he said.

Self-restraint

Gonzalez said Defensor and Presidential Adviser on Legal Affairs Gabriel Claudio would meet with officers of the Philippine Press Institute on Friday, while Transportation and Communication Secretary Leandro Mendoza and National Telecommunications Commission chief Ronald Solis would meet with members of the Kapisanan ng Brodkaster sa Pilipinas on Saturday.

Speaking before the Manila Overseas Press Club (MOPC) Tuesday night, Philippine National Police Director General Arturo Lomibao defended the posting of policemen outside the doors of The Daily Tribune and urged journalists to exercise restraint under the state of emergency.

"The case of The Daily Tribune is one of national security as they had been repeatedly publishing reports and information that were contributing to the destabilization efforts," Lomibao said.

He was unable to cite specific articles that were destabilizing but said officers were still stationed inside the newspaper building.

During a Senate budget hearing last night, Lomibao said the raid on The Daily Tribune was authorized by the Cabinet cluster committee in charge of national security, which found the newspaper "obstructing governance."

The Cabinet committee on security is composed of representatives of defense and interior departments, PNP and Armed Forces.

The Tribune's publisher and editor in chief, Ninez Cacho Olivarez, said there had been no attempt so far on the part of the PNP to intervene in the newpaper's editorial work. But she said the raid and police presence had alarmed staffers and editors.

"However strong the fight we put up, there remains a chilling effect on all editors and writers. They're worried," Olivarez told The Associated Press.

Expose, resist

In a statement, the Philippine Press Institute called on media organizations "to expose and to resist any State attempt to limit their exercise of press freedom."

"The State is trampling on grounds protected by the Constitution and hallowed by tradition. The exercise of the emergency powers does not suspend the Bill of Rights. Prior restraint on the press is anathema to a democratic way of life," the PPI said.

"That no newspaper has been closed down and no journalist has been hauled off to jail do not make the assaults on the press any less repugnant. The intent is to intimidate."

The statement was adopted during the PPI's regular board meeting yesterday. The organization is composed of representatives of major newspapers and print media groups in the country.

The Washington-based Radio-Television News Directors Association also issued a statement calling on Ms Arroyo "to rescind measures she has taken to limit press freedom in her country."

"President Arroyo's actions could usher in a new era of press censorship and intimidation," said Barbara Cochran, RTNDA president.

End intimidation

"Freedom of expression is one of the most important freedoms for a democracy. To close down a media outlet tramples on that freedom. We join journalists in the Philippines and around the world to call for an end to the intimidation of the press," she added.

RTNDA chair Dan Shelley had just returned from the Philippines where he spent a week training radio and television journalists in Manila, Cebu City and Davao City.

According to the RTNDA, it is the world's largest professional organization devoted exclusively to electronic journalism. The RTNDA represents local and network news executives in broadcasting, cable and other electronic media in more than 30 countries. *Reports from Gil C. Cabacungan Jr., Alcuin Papa, Luige A. del Puerto, Tina G. Santos, Philip Tubeza, AP and AFP*

Mike A didn't go to Marawi? Tell that to the Marines

From page A1

balls at the TV set showing Arroyo's lawyer Jesus Santos issuing a denial and yelled "liar," said one senior officer.

This was after the testimony in October last year of Brig. Gen. Francisco Gudani before a Senate committee looking into the alleged involvement of military officers in the 2004 balloting, revealed in the "Hello Garci" wiretaps.

Gudani testified shortly before his retirement.

His testimony centered on his relief as brigade commander based in Marawi, ostensibly after he reportedly rejected suggestions that he manipulate the vote.

Moneybag

Gudani told the committee headed by Sen. Rodolfo Biazon that Arroyo had gone to Marawi carrying bags containing P500 million which he allegedly used to bribe election officials.

"These soldiers provided him security, so they were sure he was here," said the officer, who declined to be named because of standing gag orders.

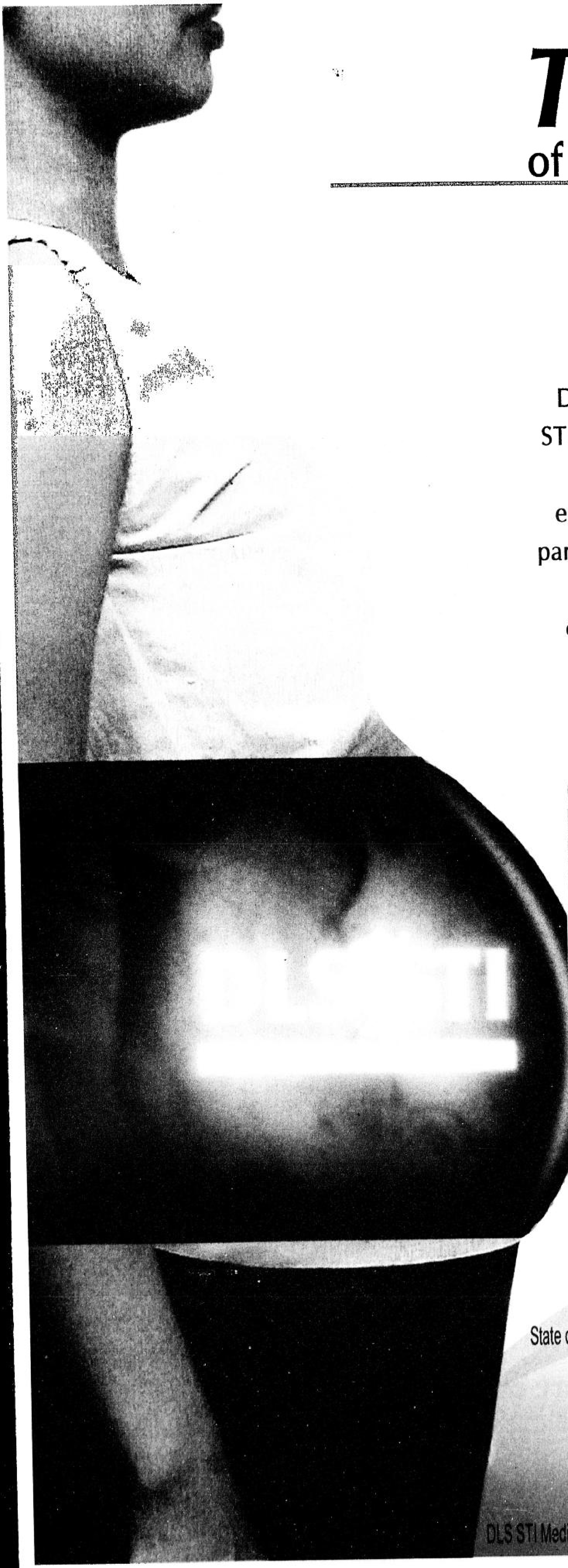
The officer said the husband of President Macapagal-Arroyo used the camp's "wardroom" to entertain his guests, mostly election officials, before the May 2004 polling.

The room has wide glass windows that overlook Marawi City and the breathtaking Lake Lanao. In the middle of the room are two long tables covered with red tablecloth. A TV set and a video player are on one side of the wall.

The wardroom is one of several structures clustered atop the Signal Hill, a leafy elevation accessible by a winding road. Beneath the hill are the barracks, offices and training ground for the Marines.

Used for illegal activities

But Marines were still sore about how their "wardroom was used for illegal activities," the senior officer said "because there were others who also used the ward room for the same activities."



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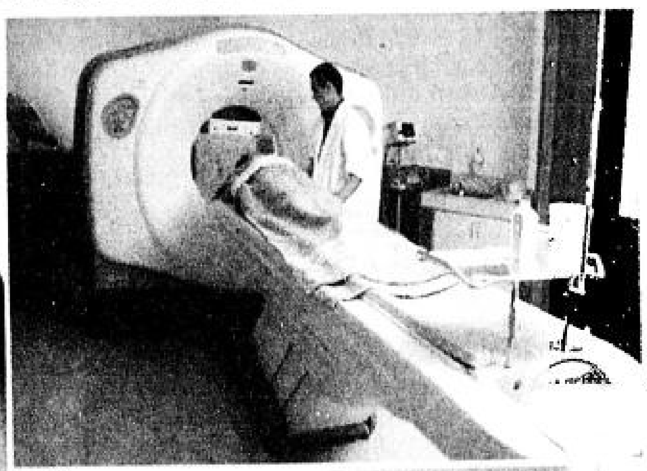

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Death for ex-lawmaker, 'Mamburao 6'

From page A1

the brothers on Dec. 13, 1997 in Mamburao.

She said the testimony of one of the accused, farmer Eduardo Hermoso, corroborated other evidence linking them to the crime, even though Hermoso later retracted his statement, claiming he had been tortured into making it.

Yadao gave little weight to Hermoso's retraction, which she said was done under dubious circumstances. She noted that Hermoso had applied for the government's witness protection program, but, when nothing came of it, he retracted.

"Unfair, the judgment is unfair," a stoic Villarosa told reporters, as he walked out of the courtroom, handcuffed and escorted by jail guards.

At his side was his wife, Occidental Mindoro Rep. Amelita Villarosa, who slammed the decision for not giving credence to her husband's alibi that he had been in the House of Representatives when a meeting between him and the gunmen was supposed to have taken place in Mindoro before the murder.

The other convicted farmers, who were alleged members of the communist New People's Army, were Josue Ungsod, Manolito Matricio, Mario Tobias, Ruben Balaguer and Gelito Bautista.

Their family members wept upon hearing the decision and hugged them as they were escorted to the van that would take them to the National Bilibid Prison in Muntinlupa City.

A number of militants from the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas condemned the alleged injustice done to the farmers.

Court documents showed that the Quintos brothers were attending a friend's birthday celebration in Mamburao when gunmen disrupted the festivities and killed the two.

The elder Quintos, a delegate to the 1971 Constitutional Convention, immediately accused Villarosa of masterminding the killings, claiming the murders were politically motivated. Villarosa denied the accusation, saying Quintos was not a threat to his political career. (Quintos lost a congressional seat to Villarosa in the 1992 and 1995 elections.)

Villarosa said the murders could have stemmed from a land dispute involving the Quintoses that displaced farmers of the 600-hectare Golden Country Farms Inc. (GCFI) in Mamburao, which Michael had managed.

On Dec. 22, 1997, the INQUIRER received an unsigned fax message from someone claiming to be an NPA member that said Michael had been killed because of alleged injustices against GCFI tenants. The sender added that the killing of Paul, a 31-year-old economist based in Makati, was accidental.

The claims were supported by Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal, spokesperson of the Communist Party of the Philippines, who announced over radio station dzMM in January 1998 that the murders were part of the group's revolutionary justice for the farmers. Quintos insisted his family treated peasants fairly.

Seven gunmen

On Dec. 22, 1997, Eduardo Hermoso was arrested. He said in a statement that he acted as one of the nine lookouts. He accused Villarosa of masterminding the murders that reportedly also involved seven gunmen and the congressman's driver and police escort.

His statement would lead to the arrest of Villarosa and the rest of the "Mamburao Six."

But Hermoso later said he had been arrested without warrant by the National Bureau of Investigation agents, detained inside the Quintos residence and tortured into signing a prepared statement.

Bail

In February 1998, on the complainants motion, the Supreme Court transferred the double-murder case from Mamburao to the Quezon City Regional Trial Court.

On April 28, 1998, Branch 76 Judge Monina Zeñarosa granted Villarosa, Bautista and Balaguer bail, although murder is a nonbailable offense.

Villarosa posted bail and was released the same day after 111 days of detention.

Following a motion from the prosecution, Zeñarosa inhibited herself from the case in September 1998. It was re-raffled to two branches, but the judges also inhibited themselves. The case was finally re-raffled to Yadao's sala.

In 2001, Villarosa defeated Quintos in the gubernatorial race. Quintos served as congressman for 10 months in the 11th Congress after he won in recount against Villarosa's wife.

President Macapagal-Arroyo approved in October 2001 the release on recognizance of the "Mamburao Six" as a confidence-building measure to help restart peace talks with the communist-led National Democratic Front.

But Yadao denied the motion for their release. The decision was criticized by militants who maintained the six were political detainees.

Senate report: GMA accountable for P728-M fertilizer scam

From page A1

took part in the "illegal dissipation" of the fund.

Presidential Political Adviser Gabriel Claudio said the committee report was politically motivated.

"A highly politicized and vindictive forum such as the series of Senate hearings on the fertilizer issue can hardly be relied upon to render a fair judgment on the accountability of the President on this matter," Claudio said.

He said the hearings were intended as a continuation in the Senate of the failed impeachment case against Ms Arroyo in the House of Representatives.

Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor welcomed the report. "That's good that they now took it out from the political witch-hunt and is now at its proper forum," he said.

Defensor expressed confidence that the case against the President would be dismissed.

"The agriculture department is only an implementing agency of the local and congressional officials who were the ones tasked with identifying and ensuring implementation," he said. "I have full trust and confidence that they implemented this with utmost efficiency."

GMA benefited the most

The agriculture and blue ribbon committees challenged the President "to break her silence and put together the pieces of the puzzle" in the scam.

"To this date, no effort on her part has been made, no categorical denial was even heard. But all allegations and testimony point to her benefiting the most in an intricate scheme of deception and fraud. Only this much the committees of the Senate know: That the fertilizer fund was misused. It was corrupted. It was intended to assure her victory. Mrs. President, could it be true?" the committees asked.

In their report, the committees noted that testimony by former Solicitor General Frank Chavez, the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas and other farmers' organizations and former Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin showed that the fund was indeed used to ensure Ms Arroyo's victory in 2004.

Boncodin had testified that Ms Arroyo may have had knowledge of Bolante's request for release of the fertilizer fund in February 2004, months before the election, to the Department of Agriculture.

Boncodin testimony

The testimony "stands and remains uncontested in legislative records," the committees said.

"The accusation against her (Ms Arroyo) is so serious that it places the position of the presidency in the balance. The Palace looks at the issue as a mere political tool. Its refusal to cooperate violates the spirit of democracy, promotes tyranny and breeds the ground for instability it has in fact stirred," they said.

"Failure to disprove the charges, even resorting to shield those directly responsible for squandering taxpayers' money, suggests her culpability and involvement in this unforgivable act made against our poor farmers."

Magsaysay presented the committee report to the plenary last night. Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago abstained from signing the report.

Plunder

The committees said Bolante, Lorenzo, Poliquit, Gonzales, Montes and all regional directors of the agriculture department "must be charged" with violating the law on plunder and the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act, they said.

"In the fertilizer fund scam, Undersecretary Bolante is the declared architect. He designed it. He was its brains. It was he who worked with the DBM for the immediate release of the fund. It was he who prepared and submitted names who would become the fertilizer fund's proponents," the committees said.

Gonzales herself admitted that it was Bolante who issued orders for the release of some P100 million to the recipients, according to the committees.

"Based on the investigation ... there appears massive misappropriation, diversion of funds, malversation of public funds and raids on the farmers' money," they noted.

"In the case of Bolante, testimony to the effect that he received, directly or indirectly, commission and a percentage of the pecuniary benefit from suppliers in connection with the contracts and transactions pertaining to the fertilizer fund have been adduced during public hearings," the committees said.

Lorenzo and Gonzales served as cosignatories of Bolante in the transfer of the fund from the agriculture department to the regional field units. Montes served as the program's spokesperson, according to the committees.

Suppliers in cahoots

The suppliers in the private sector who worked "in cahoots" with the agriculture officials to amass ill-gotten wealth from the fund by overpricing and supplying substandard and diluted fertilizers should likewise be charged with plunder, the committees said.

The committees also recommended that the contempt order against Bolante, who had defied an arrest order for him to appear in the hearings, be enforced, and that Lorenzo and Poliquit, who also snubbed the hearings, be held in contempt.

"The fertilizer fund scam will never be closed without the testimony of its brains and implementor—Jocelyn Bolante," the committees said.

"Both of them have absconded by leaving for the United States, avoiding the public hearings for the purpose," they said.

The committees recommended the total overhaul of the Department of Agriculture, noting that the department worked "in such a way as a mafia or syndicate is operating it." *With a report from Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*

GMA conditions terms for lifting emergency edict

From page A1

former Rep. Jose Cojuangco and civil society member Pastor Saycon had conspired to stage a "mutiny" led by Marines. *(See related story on Page A3.)*

But Gonzalez said the lifting of the proclamation would not set back government efforts to go after enemies of the state. "Present laws, even in the absence of [PP] 1017, may be used to prosecute individuals for rebellion or inciting to sedition," he said.

Lomibao was noncommittal, saying his recommendation would depend on "the circumstances on the ground."

"I can't definitely say the situation has [become] completely normal," he told reporters during the noon break of the Senate budget hearings.

He described the situation as "very volatile" and "still fluid."

Lomibao said the PNP could not be rushed into recommending the lifting of PP 1017.

"We're still continuing evaluation and monitoring of so-called antigovernment forces, basically the Communist Party of the Philippines, who have conspired with the so-called Magdalo officers and their cohorts in bringing down this government," he said.

In a statement, the PNP said it had directed regional field commanders and chiefs of key units to assess the security situation.

AmCham stand

"The peace and order situation and the status of the current investigation and efforts to account for those involved in the failed effort to overthrow the government will be the primary consideration for the recommendation," it said.

Ms Arroyo made her announcement as lawmakers, members of the media and other groups continued to assail her declaration of a state of emergency starting on Feb. 24 in response to an alleged coup plot.

Even the American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines Inc. (AmCham), has called for an immediate end to emergency rule.

"The foreign investment community hopes that the state of national emergency will be lifted as soon as possible," it said in a Feb. 28 statement.

The Makati-based AmCham, which counts some 600 companies and individuals as members in the country, is apparently the first private expatriate group here to air an official stand on the political crisis.

"The American business community deeply regrets the current resurgence of political instability in the Philippines and urges an early and peaceful resolution within the rule of law, with full respect for human rights," it said.

It "urge[d] all Filipinos to find peaceful ways to resolve their political differences and to move forward to implementing solutions to the urgent challenges of national economic development."

Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, president of the United Opposition, said: "Let's all pray that the police would tell [Ms Arroyo] what is true and what is based on the real situation ... As I always say, a good decision is based on good information.

"Not only do I hope that she is given proper information, I also hope she would listen to what would hopefully be correct information."

'Factual basis'

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said that just as there was a "factual basis" for the issuance of PP 1017, Ms Arroyo also wanted to be convinced that there was basis to lift it.

"We should be able to give some insights [on] how we are now, where are we, what are these threats, are they still present, and will they cause trouble for us," Ermita said in his weekly news conference.

Gonzalez said that while the Cabinet and the President had been having daily assessment meetings since Feb. 24, it was Ms Arroyo who decided to announce what she intended to do with PP 1017.

"That's her own decision. [The other] night she assessed the pros and cons that we have been discussing ... the assessments of hawks like me," Gonzalez said.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said the President went on nationwide TV and radio "to inform the Filipino people ... the real score."

Bunye and Ermita denied that Ms Arroyo was pressured to do so when she met the other day with visiting US State Assistant Secretary Christopher Hill.

Crackdown to continue

Asked if the crackdown on Ms Arroyo's political enemies would continue even after the lifting of PP 1017, Ermita said: "Well, definitely, even before 1017 was issued by the President, authorities have been doing this, as you said, crackdown. But to us, [we will] continue to monitor the situation through intelligence work and take appropriate steps so situations that are not to our liking will not build up."

Gonzalez said the crackdown would continue even after the lifting of PP 1017 because investigations would have started by then.

"You cannot stop in the middle; you have to proceed..." he said. "And in proceeding with the investigation, names and incidents may come in that we have not anticipated at this point."

PNP spokesperson Senior Supt. Samuel Pagdilao said the PNP would continue to go after those involved in the supposed coup plot under the principle of "continuing crime."

"The gathering of evidence is not dictated by the existence of a state of emergency, and neither will the charges of rebellion against people considered to be enemies of the state slacken," Pagdilao said.

Upbeat stock market

Businessmen and investors welcomed Ms Arroyo's announcement that she would lift emergency rule within 72 hours given satisfactory conditions.

The stock market itself modestly cheered the announcement, ending 12.3 points or 0.6 percent higher to close at 2,135.27.

The value of shares traded hit P1.28 billion, with net foreign buying at P307 million.

"Ending the state of emergency would have been better [to wipe out uncertainty]. Setting a time frame was the next best thing," said Jojo Gonzales, president of the Philippine Equity Partners Inc.

Teresita Sy, heiress of mall tycoon Henry Sy Sr., told reporters that political and security threats had taken a toll on the retail business.

But she was quick to stress that she welcomed Ms Arroyo's plan to lift PP 1017.

"I think she knows what to do," Sy said. "I am sure it is not going to be with us for a long time. Some people are not shopping; of course, they're afraid to go out sometimes ... We just have to work harder to make up for the losses [in revenues]."

Noli and Loren

For the first time since they parted ways during the 2004 vice presidential election, Vice President Noli de Castro and former Sen. Loren Legarda are one in calling on Ms Arroyo to lift PP 1017.

The election rivals, both popular broadcast journalists before they entered politics, said there was no need to prolong emergency rule because the situation had stabilized.

"Personally, I think it should be lifted this week because there is no more emergency, granted there was. Prolonging the emergency situation is no longer justified," De Castro said.

Legarda said PP 1017 was "a baseless and useless legal scarecrow."

"The premises of the proclamation do not exist," she said. "There is no clear and present danger to the state and the Filipino people. There is no conspiracy to topple the government."

Legarda also said the allegation that the media were stoking the fires of destabilization was just a spin by Malacañang's media handlers.

House united

In the House, both the majority and minority blocs sought the immediate lifting of PP 1017.

But they warned the United States against meddling to resolve the political crisis.

"The US should not tell us what to do. This is an internal problem for us to resolve on our own," said Rep. Antonio Cuenco (Lakas, Cebu), chair of the House committee on foreign affairs.

Said Minority Leader Francis Escudero: "In all decisions that will be made by the President, the only consideration must be the best interest of the Filipino people and their opinion and perspective, not that of another country or a foreigner."

The House majority heaped praise on the President for her announced plan to lift emergency rule, saying the proclamation had already served its purpose.

"It was meant to be temporary. Without it, the situation would have been worse," Majority Leader Prospero Nograles said in a text message.

"[Now] the market's up. The peso is up. It shows [she] is in full control and won't hesitate to use her powers to preserve democracy, law and order and uphold the Constitution without hesitation..." *With reports from Luige A. del Puerto, TJ Burgonio, Elizabeth L. Sanchez, Cynthia D. Balana, Armand N. Nocum, Volt Contreras, Michael Lim Ubac and Tarra V. Quismundo*

Gonzalez to Joker: You've more experience with edicts

From page A1

senator is also "better experienced" than he in issuing proclamations.

Gonzalez yesterday sought to belie the senator's warning on Tuesday that after Presidential Proclamation No. 1017—which Gonzalez admitted to having drafted—President Macapagal-Arroyo was about to come out with another edict to use against her political foes.

He pointed out that it was Senator Arroyo who was responsible for abolishing Congress and the 1973 Constitution, under then President Corazon Aquino's revolutionary government.

Aquino, who was swept to power after Edsa I toppled Ferdinand Marcos' dictatorship in 1986, named Arroyo as her executive secretary.

Arroyo said on Tuesday that the President had another proclamation under way after Executive Order No. 464 (which bars government officials from testifying in congressional inquiries without her clearance) and PP 1017.

"Our own info is there's a third one coming against an enemy we don't know yet, because, you know, it's the President who chooses her enemies," he said.

But Gonzalez said: "He has quite an imagination. I think Joker should be the one to make the proclamation."

Emergency powers

Asked what Ms Arroyo could issue should she decide to do so, Gonzalez said: "The first step is asking Congress for emergency powers."

But he said this idea had "never reached that far, not even the *platito* on our table here."

Even Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita denied Arroyo's warning.

"That is only an impression of Senator Arroyo," Ermita told reporters, adding:

"In all honesty and candidness, I have no knowledge whatsoever what that other issuance is.

"He may have his sources. He is free to make his conjectures. As far as I'm concerned I do not know of such a document."

In a separate phone interview, Gonzalez said Malacañang was not contemplating imposing martial law or wielding other emergency powers because doing so would require the imprimatur of Congress.

Asked whether the measure Arroyo was referring to involved martial law, Gonzalez said: "It's not even an option. It can be emergency powers, which would need the ratification of Congress.

"We don't expect Congress to cooperate. So anything that would require [its] cooperation is not on the table.

"You can't even expect the Senate to support you, so what's the use? That's the reality."

Draconian measures

Under her revolutionary government, Aquino issued Proclamation No. 1 ordering all government officials, including court officials, to submit courtesy resignations.

Proclamation No. 3 sought the drafting of a "Freedom Constitution."

"There is nothing more draconian than what happened in 1986 under Cory and Joker," Gonzalez said.

‘Final Talk 2’ a tall tale, says lawyer

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan, Luige A. del Puerto and Tara V. Quismundo

WHERE DID “FINAL TALK 2”—CODE NAME of a planned alliance between communist guerrillas and rebel soldiers purportedly revealed in a seized computer flash disk—come from?

Police officers who arrested Magdalo mutiny leader 1Lt. Lawrence San Juan and his lawyer Jose Christopher Belmonte last Feb. 21 in Padre Garcia, Batangas, did not report any computer files or documents found in their possession.

It was six days later when authorities claimed that they had recovered from San Juan several documents and flash disks that contained an 18-page document detailing an agreement between the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the Makabayang Kawal Pilipino (MKP) to bring down the Arroyo government.

The plan, dubbed Final Talk 2, was used as basis to file nonbailable rebellion charges against San Juan, Belmonte and 14 others, including known CPP leaders, six party-list representatives and retired and active military personnel.

“There was no such thing as a flash disk,” said Roel Pulido, lawyer for the Magdalo group that staged the failed 2003 Oakwood mutiny.

He said yesterday that the first thing he did when he reached the Batangas Police station where San Juan, Belmonte and another companion, Alberto Guyal, were held was to check on the items found in their vehicle.

The affidavit filed by two arresting officers said the items found were a Magdalo flag, a pair of fiberglass eyeglasses, a photocopy of car registration, photocopy of registration form for PMI Colleges, two pieces of clothing, a pair of shorts and a pocketbook titled “Sensei.”

The affidavit dated Feb. 21 was signed by Senior PO3 Segundo Binay and Senior PO1 Fidel Macatangay of the Intelligence Section of the Batangas Police Provincial Office.

It was sworn before Assistant Provincial Prosecutor Cynthia Ricablanca who handled the cases filed against Belmonte and Guyal.

A big lie

“This is proof beyond doubt that the so-called Final Talk 2 is a big lie. This is an official document that cannot be denied,” Pulido said.

He said San Juan and Belmonte had a cell phone each which were taken from them. The cell phones were not mentioned in the affidavit.

On Feb. 22, a day after San Juan’s arrest, Army chief Lt. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon announced that taken from San Juan were a Magdalo flag “and personal belongings including eight cell phones.”

He did not mention any documents or flash disks nor of Final Talk 2. He spoke instead about the Magdalo group’s supposed “Oplan Hackle” that included recruitment for another uprising.

It was on Feb. 26, or two days after Ms Arroyo declared emergency rule, when a military spokesperson first mentioned “documents taken from San Juan” that supposedly talked about an alliance between the communists and the rebel soldiers.

The next day, on Feb. 27 the military gave reporters a four-page briefing paper about “Final Talk 2” that gave a long list of items supposedly recovered from San Juan, namely “several high-value documents, a Magdalo flag, eight cellular phones, personal belongings, two flash disks, a tape recorder and Maxell audio cassette cartridges and diskettes.”

No computers

No computers, which are needed to read the flash disks, were mentioned in the new list of recovered items.

The flash disks, the military declared, contained an 18-page document titled, “Minutes re Final Talk” dated Feb. 20, a day before San Juan’s arrest, that detailed an agreement between the CPP and the Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan [KAB] to oust Ms Arroyo and grab power.

The military admitted the minutes contained only aliases, but that they have an inkling who the aliases refer to.

Belmonte and San Juan through his wife have denied being in talks with CPP-New People’s Army cadres in Batangas, as authorities claimed.

Magdalo denial

The Magdalo group has also denied a tie-up with the communists in a statement issued by Air Force Capt. Segundino Orfiano Jr. on Feb. 22.

Shortly after joining her husband in Tuesday’s hearing against mutinous soldiers at the Makati Regional Trial Court, San Juan’s wife Evelyn denied charges that San Juan had links with the CPP.

“That’s one thing that he denies ... the association ... those charges,” Evelyn San Juan told reporters the other day.

San Juan’s father shared the sentiment, saying it was impossible for his son to resort to the unlikely team-up to pursue his cause.

“We do not believe that. He is not capable of doing that, because his principles are different,” said San Juan’s father, retired engineer Rodolfo San Juan.

Alert level still high in camps

“DISINFORMATION” CIRCULATED through text messages have prompted the Armed Forces to maintain a high alert level among its military camps in Metro Manila, an official of the Philippine Air Force (PAF) said yesterday.

“There’s a lot of disinformation that has been going around. Although unverified or untrue, the level of alert was maintained,” Lt. Col. Restituto Padilla, told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

Padilla said that the military has been implementing the alert level called “Defcon 1,” which is one stage higher than the red alert level, since last Friday’s alleged coup attempt.

It was the same alert level followed during the standoff at the Philippine Marine Corps in Fort Bonifacio on Sunday, Padilla said.

“Defcon” stands for “Defense Condition.”

According to Padilla, Defcon 3 means that the “country is under attack;” Defcon 2, the country is under “imminent attack;” and Defcon 1, there is “security information” about a possible attack.

On Tuesday night, text messages circulated that the PAF headquarters at the Villamor Air Base in Pasay City was on double alert.

The text messages said that soldiers had been deployed around the base and that firearms had been brought there, as well as food.

But Padilla said all this was part of the beefed up security. *Nikko Dizon*

Old charges dug up vs 6 party-list reps

By Armand N. Nocum, Michael Lim Ubac and Christine O. Avendaño

THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE has revived charges filed more than 20 years ago to pin down six party-list representatives whom the government had accused of alleged involvement in recent moves to destabilize the Arroyo administration.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez believes the DOJ has a strong case against Anakpawis Reps. Rafael Mariano and Crispin Beltran; Bayan Reps. Teodoro Casino and Joel Virador; and Satur Ocampo and Liza Maza, Bayan Muna and Gabriela representatives, respectively.

“We think it’s strong enough,” Gonzalez said of the rebellion charges filed against the six legislators.

Coming out

The DOJ, however, wants to pin down the six legislators on old charges, particularly their alleged involvement in the bloody “purges” which the Communist Party of the Philippines conducted in the 1980s to flush out suspected government spies.

Gonzalez told the INQUIRER they will finally nail the six because relatives of those slain during the purges have now expressed willingness to testify in court against the six.

“Numerous relatives and kin of those slain are now coming out to testify,” he said.

But the nature of the charges being hurled at the party-list lawmakers has left Ocampo confused.

“This is a witchhunt. Which case are they referring to?” asked a puzzled Ocampo.

Deadly purges

“We’re supposed to have conspired with the Communist Party of the Philippines? But we’re also supposedly involved in coup, a charge which is ’still being developed’,” said Ocampo.

Ocampo denied they had a role in the purge of communist ranks of suspected government spies.

“In fact, I have been absolved of that already,” said Ocampo, referring to the trial from 1989 to 1992 conducted by two Quezon City regional trial courts.

“The justice department should review their archives. They are filing a case against me that has already been dismissed by the RTCs. That questions the competence of the DOJ,” said Ocampo.

The anti-infiltration campaigns that the CPP initiated in the 1980s were “Oplan Kadena de Amor” in Southern Tagalog (1982), “Kampanyang Ahos” in Mindanao (1985-86), “Operation Missing Link” in Southern Tagalog (1988), and “Operation Olympia” (1988-89), a nationwide campaign.

At least 1,800 CPP-NPA cadres and civilians were believed killed during the purges.

Gonzalez said the six could also be liable for murder charges, but that such crime is now deemed included in the rebellion complaints.

On Monday, Philippine National Police filed rebellion and insurrection complaints against the six congressmen and 45 alleged communists leaders—including CPP founder Jose Maria Sison—who were accused of mounting a three-year plan to topple the Arroyo administration.

Military adventurists

Other accused include Luis Jalandoni of the National Democratic Front, CPP/ NPA central committee officials Benito and Wilma Tiamzon, Milito Glor Command spokesperson Gregorio Rosal, Bayan Secretary General Nathaniel Santiago, NDF commanding officer Tirso Alcantara; and NDF Bicol regional party head Sotero Llamas.

Sison, based in the Netherlands, has denied allegations that the rebels had entered into a tactical alliance with “military adventurists” to topple Ms Arroyo. *With reports from Norman Bordadora and AFP*

‘Oxbridge’ Club to honor UK envoy, ADB president

OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE CLUB HONORS British Ambassador and ADB President

The Oxford and Cambridge Club of the Philippines will hold a reception today in honor of the British Ambassador to the Philippines, Peter Beckingham and the Asian Development Bank president Haruhiko Kuroda. The affair will be hosted by Philip Romualdez, president of Oxford and Cambridge Club, at his residence.

The Oxford and Cambridge Club of the Philippines is an organization of graduates of Oxford University and Cambridge University in the United Kingdom who reside or work in the Philippines.

At present, it has about 50 members, a number of whom are professionals of the Asian Development Bank, including the ADB President.

Kuroda completed Master of Philosophy in Economics in Oxford. Before joining the ADB, Kuroda was Special Advisor to the Cabinet of Japanese Prime Minister Januchiro Koizumi.

Ambassador Beckingham, on the other hand, is a graduate of Cambridge University where he took up Bachelor and Master of Arts.

Beckingham has been working with Great Britain’s Foreign Service Office since the early 1980s and has been assigned to the United States, Europe and the Asia-Pacific.

Another noted British national who is a member of the club is Howard Belton, the chair and CEO of Unilever Philippines. He took up Bachelor of Arts in Economic, Politics and Philosophy in Cambridge.

Among the Filipinos who graduated from Oxford and Cambridge are: Fred Elizalde (Cambridge), Antonio Araneta (Oxford), Ambassador Jose Romero (Cambridge), Ambassador Jose Syjuco (Oxford), Ferdinand Marcos Jr. (Oxford), Philip Romualdez (Oxford), Jeffrey and Winnefred Ching (Cambridge), Luis Virata (Cambridge), Elizabeth-Cu-unjieng Virata (Cambridge), Philip Cu-unjing (Cambridge), Antonio Periquet (Oxford), and Anatess Arnaldo-Oracion (Cambridge).

Romualdez, who graduated Master of Letters at Oxford University, sees the OXBRIDGE Club to be at the center of major British-related activities in the Philippines. He said that it will foster business relation between the U.K. and the Philippines.

Romualdez believes that the Club will be able to effectively link graduates of Oxford and Cambridge with work / business opportunities in areas / fields where OXBRIDGE influence may work.

The Club will co-host visiting dignitaries who are graduates of Oxford and Cambridge (e.g., Prince Charles, former British Prime Minister M. Thatcher and former U. S. President Clinton). He added that the Club will also serve as link to graduates of OXBRIDGE/coming to the Philippines for pleasure or business.

Romualdez said that the Club will establish strong ties with the other Oxford and Cambridge Clubs around the world and participate in their activities like tourism, arts and business.

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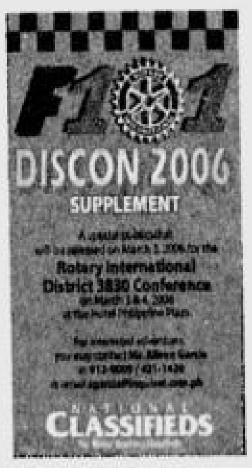
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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Thaksin seeks help of supporters

BANGKOK—EMBATTLED PRIME MINISTER THAKSIN Shinawatra said Wednesday he would not bow to growing demands to step down, appealing to supporters to help him end a deepening political crisis.

"I guarantee that I will not resign from my position," Thaksin told reporters after meeting with leaders of his ruling Thai Rak Thai party. "I will handle my responsibilities in this position as well as I can."

The comments came amid swirling rumors that either Thaksin would resign to end Thailand's worst political crisis in a decade or that the military would intervene and stage a coup, which top military officials dismissed.

"Rumors of a military coup are not true," Supreme Commander Gen. Rueangrot Mahâsaranon, head of the country's armed forces, told reporters. "The military will not interfere in the political conflict. The political problem should be resolved by politicians."

Thaksin met Tuesday with military leaders over lunch at his office, prompting speculation that army chiefs at the meeting had suggested the prime minister resign.

"We had lunch, and I have not heard of the army chief saying that sort of thing," Rueangrot said.

Hoping to stave off a mass anti-government rally planned for Sunday, Thaksin called on supporters to flood his office with mail over the next few days to show they still wanted him in power.

"I am appealing to all Thai people who want peace and democracy to send postcards and letters," Thaksin told reporters earlier Wednesday, adding that he would post all the messages outside his government compound "to make the opposition realize they should cooperate with the government to tackle the crisis."

Trying to head off mounting calls for his resignation, Thaksin dissolved Parliament on Friday and called for early national elections. But the election has become another crisis for Thaksin, with the opposition saying it will boycott the vote, scheduled for April 2.

Anti-Thaksin activists issued an ultimatum Tuesday demanding that Thaksin step down or face what they say will be the biggest anti-government rally yet on Sunday. Protesters, who have staged weekend rallies drawing tens of thousands of people, want Thaksin to resign for alleged corruption and abuse of power.

The prime minister has vowed to hold his own pro-government rally Friday.

Thailand has a long history of military coups. The last was in February 1991, when Gen. Sunthon Kongsomphong overthrew the government of Prime Minister Chatchai Choonhavan.

The military has since distanced itself from domestic politics, but the political stalemate and growing street demonstrations have led to speculation that it once again might intervene.

Thaksin, one of the country's richest men, won a second term as prime minister a year ago with a landslide election victory by his party, which took 377 of the 500 seats in the House of Representatives.

In addition to allegations of corruption, he has also come under fire for mishandling a Muslim insurgency in southern Thailand, stifling the media and allegedly allowing cronies to reap gains from state policies. *AP*

Bush visits Afghanistan en route to India, Pakistan

KABUL—US PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH made a surprise visit to Afghanistan on Wednesday, flying in secretly to support the country's fledging government in the face of rising violence from al-Qaida and Taliban militants.

Bush made a detour from a trip to India and Pakistan for a five-hour visit in Afghanistan that was not announced officially until Air Force One landed at the sprawling Bagram military base north of Kabul, the capital.

The White House wanted to conceal Bush's presence to reduce the risk of any attempt on his life.

Bush, making his first visit to Afghanistan, was later greeted by President Hamid Karzai at his palace in Kabul. Bush was accompanied by his wife, Laura, and US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

"Welcome, the president, to Afghanistan," Karzai said as the two leaders paused for photographs on a red carpet.

Bush and Karzai were to have lunch and hold a joint press conference, said an Afghan official, who was familiar with Karzai's schedule but did not want to be named because of the sensitivity of the issue.

Bush was also to preside over a ceremonial ribbon-cutting for the U.S. Embassy, and to give a pep talk to troops at Bagram Air Base.

When Bush signed off on the India-Pakistan visit eight weeks ago, he was presented with the option of also going to Afghanistan, and chose it, White House press secretary Scott McClellan said.

"This is an opportunity to show our support for a good friend and ally and emerging democracy," McClellan said. "We stand firmly with the people of Afghanistan as they are charting their own future."

Security was tight in the Afghan capital, with helicopters flying overhead and US military Humvee jeeps patrolling the streets.

The US military leads a 21,000-strong coalition of international forces hunting Taliban and al-Qaida militants, mostly in the country's south and east.

Karzai is a close ally of Washington and took power after the ouster of the hardline Taliban regime by US-led forces in late 2001 for hosting al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden. *AP*

IMPORTANT

To the Devotees of the SACRED HEART OF JESUS. Tomorrow, March 3, 2006 is the FIRST FRIDAY of the month. Novenas to the SACRED HEART OF JESUS and to ST. ANTHONY are given free. Please get them from JASMINE at the Santuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park, Makati City .

MARDI GRAS
King of Mardi Rex travels down St. Charles Avenue while celebrating Mardi Gras Day in New Orleans Feb. 28. REUTERS

Bird flu spreads in Europe and Africa

PARIS—BIRD FLU IS LIKELY TO hit poultry flocks in a number of European states, experts said on Tuesday, while the spread of the virus to one of Africa's poorest countries, Niger, heightened fears that the infection could spread to people.

In pet-loving Europe, the report that a domestic cat in Germany had died of possible H5N1 avian influenza sparked alarm, but experts said it was unlikely the case increased the risks to humans.

Sweden became the latest in a series of new countries to report an outbreak of bird flu. Two wild ducks found dead on the Baltic coast had an aggressive form of bird flu and officials said it was likely to be confirmed as the feared H5N1 strain.

The French Agriculture Ministry said a 16th wild swan had tested positive for H5N1 in the Ain department of eastern France. Security measures have been put in place.

France has already confirmed an outbreak of the virus at a turkey farm in the same department.

Niger ordered a cull of all poultry in areas hit by bird flu and said it was stepping up checks across the rest of the semi-desert country to try to stop the disease from spreading. The poor former French colony became the second sub-Saharan African nation after neighboring Nigeria to confirm the presence of H5N1, which mostly affects birds but which has infected 173 people, killing 93 of them since 2003.

The government in Niger held an emergency cabinet meeting and said "preventative measures" were being taken.

"They include the systematic culling of poultry in affected zones, the destruction by incineration and burying of suspect cases, of dead birds and of objects that may have been in contact with these birds," the government said in a statement.

Niger is one of the poorest countries on earth, where one child in four dies before the age of five.

Experts fear weak detection systems in Africa—which has an estimated 1.1 billion chickens, mostly in backyard farms—combined with the easy movement of birds across borders and limited awareness about the disease could help its spread. *Reuters*

68 killed in Baghdad bombings, mortar fire

BAGHDAD—SUNNIS AND Shiites traded bomb attacks and mortar fire against mainly religious targets in Baghdad well into the night Tuesday, killing at least 68 people a day after authorities lifted a curfew that had briefly calmed a series of sectarian reprisal attacks.

The surge of violence deepened the trauma of residents already shaken by fears the country was teetering on the brink of sectarian civil war, threatened talks among Iraqi politicians struggling to form a government and raised questions about US plans to begin drawing down troop strength this summer.

Iraq began to seriously tilt toward outright civil war after the Wednesday bombing of the important Shiite Askariya shrine in the mainly Sunni city of Samarra.

President Bush decried the latest surge in sectarian violence Tuesday and said that for Iraqis "the choice is chaos or unity."

In Congressional testimony, National Intelligence Director John Negroponte said a civil war in Iraq could lead to a broader conflict in the Middle East, pitting the region's Sunni and Shiite powers against one another.

At least six of Tuesday's attacks hit religious targets, concluding with a car bombing after sundown at the Shiite Abdel Hadi Chalabi mosque in the Hurriyah neighborhood that killed 23 and wounded 55.

At about the same time, a mortar round hit the Shiite Imam Kadhim shrine in the Kazimiyah neighborhood on the opposite side of the Tigris River, killing one and wounding 10.

Those attacks appeared to have been in retaliation for assaults on Sunni places of worship earlier in the day. *AP*

Russia, Iran bid to break nuke impasse

MOSCOW—RUSSIAN AND Iranian negotiators make a fresh bid in Moscow on Wednesday to reach a compromise deal that might defuse Tehran's stand-off with the West over its nuclear programme.

Iranian officials, headed by top nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani, were due to meet a Russian delegation for further discussion of Moscow's proposal to carry out uranium enrichment for the Islamic Republic on Russian soil.

Larijani's presence, matched by that of Russian Security Council chief Igor Ivanov, put the new round of talks on a higher footing and raised hopes Iran was taking the Russian proposal seriously, something the West at times has doubted.

"We are optimistic we can agree with our Iranian partners ... we think we can come to an agreement that a joint venture on the soil of the Russian Federation will be able to meet Iran's needs fully," Russian President Vladimir Putin told a news conference during a visit to Hungary.

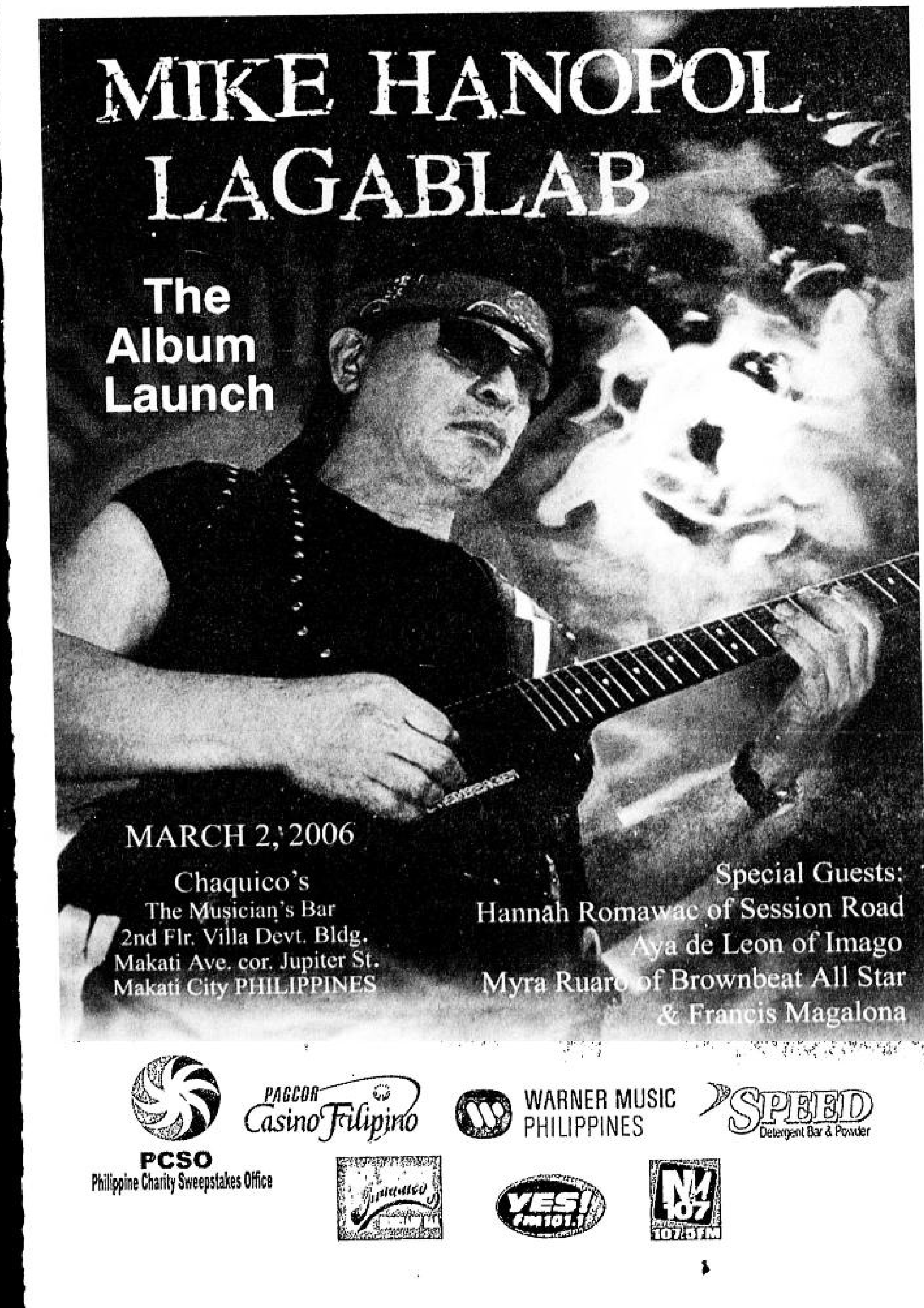
Moscow sees the enrichment joint venture as a way out of confrontation, but diplomats in Europe and the United States doubt the proposal will satisfy Iran, which they suspect of covertly seeking nuclear weapons.

Although Tehran says it has a "basic" agreement with Russia about the scheme, it has refused so far to give up what it sees as its right to enrich uranium at home.

"We would like to enjoy our rights like Japan to have nuclear technology, of course for peaceful purposes," Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said in Japan on Tuesday.

Iran has said the world must recognise it should eventually be allowed to carry out enrichment domestically and in the meantime it must be able to conduct nuclear fuel research.

"It sounds as if they are combining technical expert discussions with highly-placed diplomatic efforts. They are making their best efforts on both sides and I take that as a good sign," said Rose Gottemoeller, director of the Moscow Carnegie Centre and a non-proliferation expert *Reuters*



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Trial of Saddam, 7 aides resumes

BAGHDAD—THE TRIAL OF SADDAM HUSsein and seven aides on charges of crimes against humanity resumed Wednesday with all the defense lawyers attending the session except Saddam's lead lawyer Khalil al-Dulaimi.

All the eight defendants came to the court and sat down quietly, an AFP correspondent reported.

Wednesday's hearing came amid fears of fresh outbreak of communal bloodshed in Iraq after a roadside bomb killed three in Baghdad, a day after a spate of bombings left 64 dead.

Iraqi prosecutors on Tuesday submitted to the court trying Saddam what they said was an execution order signed by the former Iraqi dictator, as his lawyers stormed out of the tribunal.

Documents were presented linking Saddam to the trial and execution of 148 villagers from Dujail, north of Baghdad, in some of the most significant documentary evidence to have been presented by the prosecution so far.

Saddam's lead lawyers, Khalil al-Dulaimi and Khamis Ubaydi, had walked out of the courtroom at the start of the hearing after the judge rejected their pleas for proceedings to be postponed and for the judge and chief prosecutor to be dismissed for alleged bias against the accused.

Ubaydi however was seen in the court Wednesday.

On Tuesday after their walkout they were immediately replaced by court-appointed lawyers who represented Saddam during an earlier defense counsel walkout.

Tuesday's hearing, which was quieter than previous sessions that threatened to descend into chaos owing to noisy interventions by the defendants, lasted two hours before being adjourned.

One of the documents, dated June 16, 1984 and allegedly signed by Saddam Hussein, confirmed the death sentences passed by a tribunal two days earlier. The disappearance of the men from Dujail followed a 1982 assassination attempt on Saddam in the village.

Prosecutors also submitted documentary evidence to show Saddam's office had ordered that the sentences be carried out, along with a letter, dated March 23, 1985, confirming the executions had taken place and a doctor was on duty to confirm the deaths.

The prosecutors said the villagers had been sentenced after a show trial in which they did not even appear.

Saddam and seven former cohorts, face death by hanging if they are convicted by the court.

The resumption of the trial came against a background of deadly civil unrest in Iraq, which included the bombing of the tomb of Saddam's father in his hometown of Tikrit.

The trial, which opened in October, resumed after a stormy hearing on Feb. 14, when a defiant Saddam announced he was on hunger strike amid chaotic scenes.

Dulaimi told AFP on Monday that the deposed president had ended his fast to protest court proceedings.

The trial has frequently run into trouble, with stormy sessions featuring long outbursts or walkouts by the defendants and their counsel as well as the resignation of the previous chief judge and the killing of two defense lawyers.

The trial is currently in the second phase of depositions by witnesses testifying over events during the Dujail massacre. *AFP*

WORLDBRIEFS

30 al-Qaida militants killed

MIRANSHAH, Pakistan—Pakistani army troops backed by attack helicopters Wednesday destroyed a suspected al-Qaida camp near the Afghan border, killing or wounding up to 30 mainly foreign militants, officials said. At least 10 soldiers were injured and evacuated to a military hospital after a firefight with militants near the village of Saidgai in the remote North Waziristan tribal region. The troops surrounded the compound of eight houses after it had been severely pounded by helicopters which, according to local officials, killed or wounded up to 30 suspected al-Qaida fighters. "Between 25 to 30 foreign militants were killed or wounded in the raid," the region's top administration official Zaheerul Islam told AFP. A senior security official said the raid was conducted on specific information that al-Qaida was using the compound as a base to launch attacks across the border. *AFP*

Bush defends ports deal

WASHINGTON—President George W. Bush on Tuesday reaffirmed his support for letting a Dubai company control operations at key US ports despite a storm of political opposition. Despite polls showing widespread public displeasure with the arrangement, and plans for a new review, Bush and US national intelligence director John Negroponte said that the deal carried no security risk. The head of Dubai Ports World, the company at the center of the controversy, said meanwhile that the takeover was too far advanced to stop and also complained about the company's treatment by US lawmakers. Bush has threatened to veto any legislation blocking the deal and he said: "My position hasn't changed." "If there was any doubt in my mind, or people in my administration's mind that our ports would be less secure and the American people endangered, this deal wouldn't go forward," said the president. *AFP*

Protest vs Bush visit

NEW DELHI—Tens of thousands of Indians waving black and white flags and chanting "Death to Bush!" rallied Wednesday in New Delhi to protest a visit by US President George W. Bush. Crowd estimates varied, but one police officer said as many as 100,000 people, most of them Muslim, had gathered in a fairground in central New Delhi ordinarily used for political rallies, ahead of Bush's arrival late Wednesday. Among the speakers was Raj Babbar, a Hindu politician and actor, who said: "Whether Hindu or Muslim, the people of India have gathered here to show our anger. We have only one message—killer Bush go home." While Bush remains more popular in India than he is in many other countries, many here object to US policies, especially the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. *AP*

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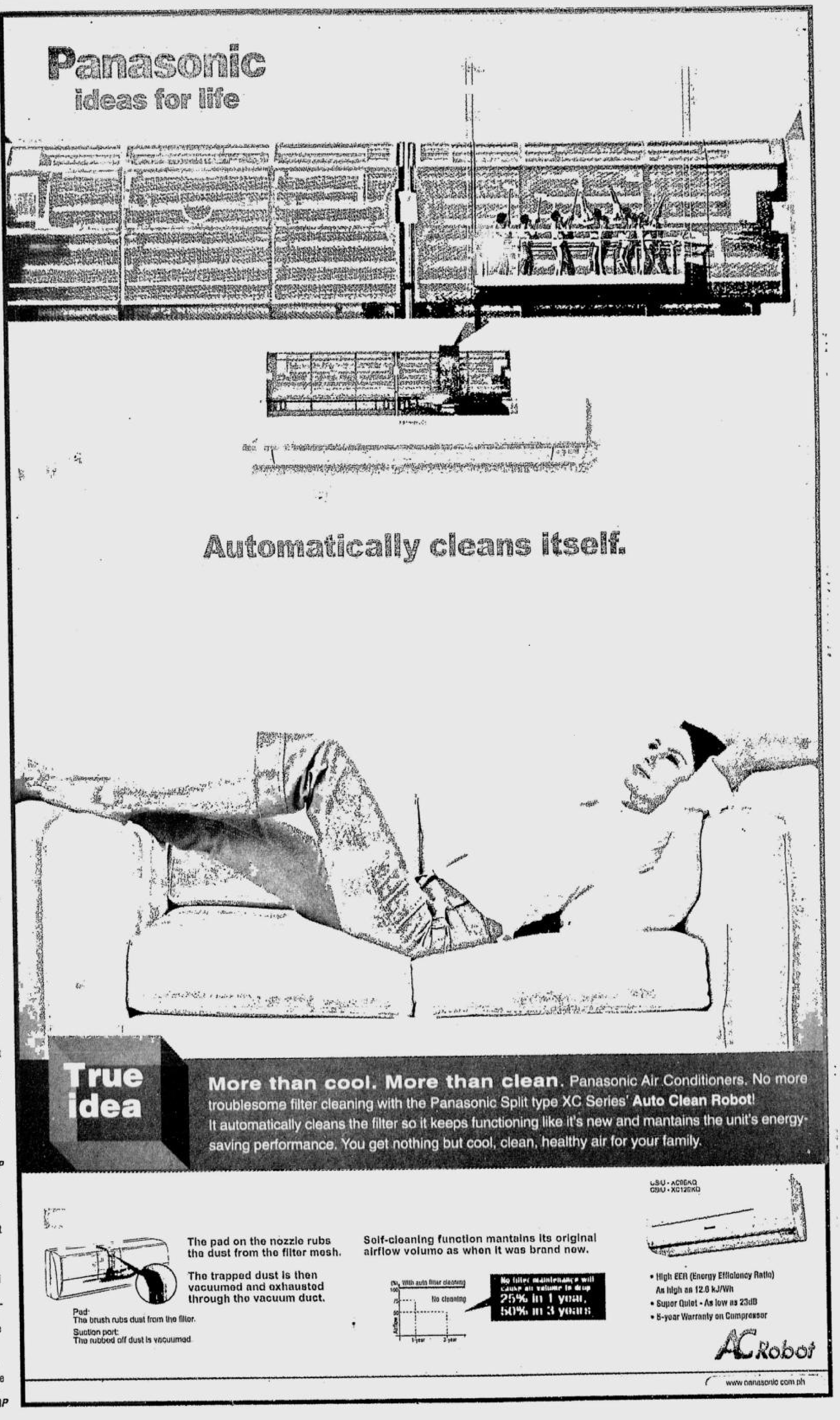
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OPINION

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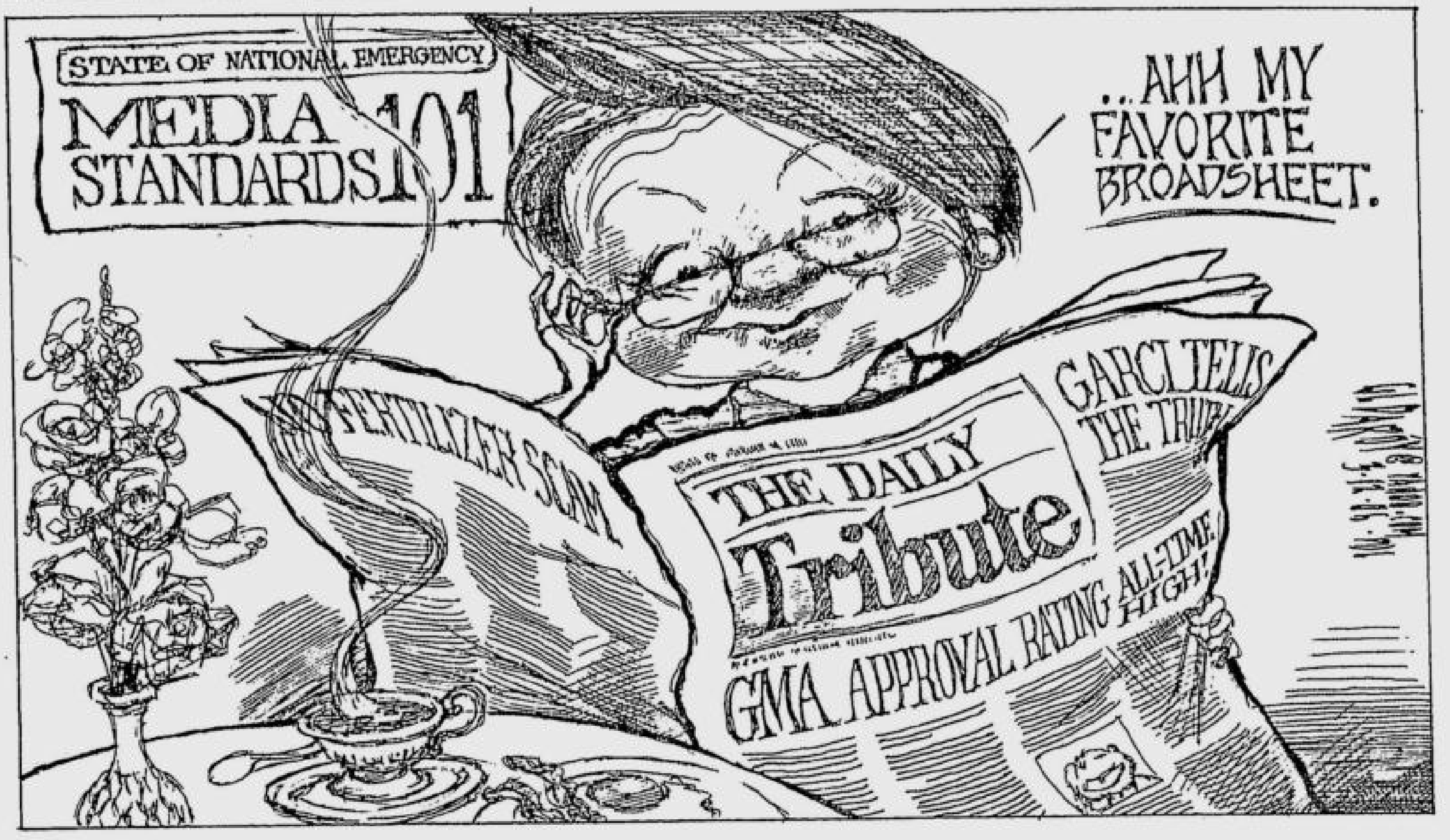
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Real emergency

EDITORIAL

ARE FILIPINOS SUPPOSED TO WAIT WITH BATED breath while President Macapagal-Arroyo ponders over the next 72 hours whether it's time to lift the reign of fear and repression she has unleashed upon the nation? And, if and when she deigns to do so, are the people supposed to be grateful to her for allowing them to breathe the air of freedom she sucked out by signing Presidential Proclamation No. 1017?

Five days after declaring a state of national emergency and calling out the armed forces to suppress a "rebellion," Ms Arroyo went on nationwide television yesterday to make the momentous announcement that she was changing nothing. But she dangled the possibility that she might recall PP 1017. Within 72 hours, she said, she expected the justice secretary to give her his assessment of the "destabilization movements" of her political foes. The secretary of national defense will also update her on "conditions in the military," while the chief of the Philippine National Police will do the same with regard to the peace and order situation. "I will lift the state of emergency once I am convinced [and] the security officials can assure me that we are in control of the situation," she promised.

But was there ever a time since Friday when any one in the administration, in the police or in the military, declared that the situation was out of control? Even at the height of the potentially explosive tantrum thrown by misinformed Marines, nobody in government came forward to make that assertion. If anything or anyone was out of control, it was the administration and the enforcers of PP 1017. They were the ones who broke up with truncheons a peaceful demonstration on Edsa. They were the ones who arrested Randy David and several others who were peacefully marching on Edsa. They were the ones who dug up a case that was older than Edsa I to justify the detention of Anakpawis party-list Rep. Crispin Beltran and sought to arrest without warrant a handful of other leftist members of the House of Representatives. They were the ones who raided The Daily Tribune and sent troopers to keep watch over some media organizations and intimidate newspeople. They are the ones who continue to threaten television and radio stations and newspapers with closure in case they violate government standards that do not even exist. And they seem to be enjoying their first exercise of extraordinary powers that are of doubtful legality.

The principal enforcers of PP 1017 are unlikely to surrender easily the much wider leeway they have been given to get back at their imagined tormentors in media and their enemies in the Left. So if the President would rely solely on the judgment of her "security officials," it might be premature to expect the withdrawal of the state of emergency by the weekend. In fact, they have already rejected earlier suggestions by her economic team to lift the state of emergency as soon as possible to calm the financial markets. Instead, they offered a security briefing to the economic managers who promptly yielded to the hard-liners' view, leaving little doubt as to who were calling the shots.

The security cluster members' continuing resistance to return to normality is evident from their reaction to the President's latest announcement. Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez has said there are still some "loose ends" that need to be tied before the state of emergency is lifted. PNP Director General Arturo Lomibao has described the situation as "volatile." If they were to have their way, it is almost certain that the state of emergency will be around for some time yet.

But pressure is building up for the recall of the proclamation. Instead of decimating its ranks, PP 1017 is broadening and strengthening the opposition. Major religious congregations are coming together to oppose the proclamation. The campuses are beginning to stir up in ferment. Business groups, while initially welcoming the President's use of the iron hand, are starting to call for the lifting of PP 1017. And the government of the United States appears to have signaled its reservations about a prolongation of the state of emergency.

How much longer will the President resist these pressures? All her instincts must be telling her now to terminate an ill-conceived and dangerous experiment. Unless she has fallen hostage to her fears and her "security officials," it would be pointless to hang on to a proclamation that promises to bring her presidency to a real state of emergency.

Press tutorial

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

"We learn from history that we learn nothing from history."—George Bernard Shaw

IN THE CALIBRATED ATTEMPT TO INTIMIDATE the press, does the President's General Order No. 5 farcically repeat the tragedy that was the dictator Marcos' "Letter of Instruction No. 1"?

Proclamation 1017 declaring a state of emergency only means the President can call on the armed forces to assist the police to curb lawless violence or rebellion, constitutional scholar Joaquin Bernas, SJ, points out. Nothing more. "It does not authorize her to cross constitutional demarcation lines."

But "to all appearances, her minions read it as a declaration of war," Father Bernas notes. "The danger of abuse is significantly enhanced. Now, the iron fist is.... showing behind the mask."

There have been initial brawls with media. National Telecommunications officials demanded that TV and radio "refrain from airing statements that incite." Police raided the opposition's Daily Tribune. Troops surrounded two TV stations.

Presidential chief of staff Michael Defensor endlessly invokes GO 5 to justify this assault. The police will monitor the press, PNP Director General Arturo Lomibao says. And if we in the media are "guilty" in their view, why, they'd just "take over." How's that for a refresher course in Marcosian diktats?

Let's get a few facts straight. A state of emergency declaration does not suspend the Bill of Rights. Prohibitions against abridging freedom of the press, therefore, remain in force. Thus, government cannot impose prior restraints, send in censors, much less padlock media.

"There are absolutes in our Bill of Rights," Justice Hugo Black said. "They were put there on purpose by men who knew what words mean and meant that their prohibitions were absolute."

That constitutional bedrock is why Sen. Joker Arroyo urged the press to stand firm. Any law or order that fractures constitutionally protected rights "is unenforceable," he stressed.

But Defensor, Lomibao et al. haven't learned from the Constitution. Perhaps, history can offer a tutorial?

Lesson One: Suppressing media is self-defeating.

GO 5 isn't even a stripped-down version of the dictator's "Letter of Implementation No. 12." On Sept. 25, 1972, Minister Francisco Tatad signed "Public Information Order No. 1" setting the guidelines.

Among other things, it banned any editorial, opinion, commentary and materials "that tend to incite or otherwise inflame people ... undermine people's faith in government ... and thereby thwart efforts to achieve a New Society."

The result was a press whose "credibility was so low, it became a mere publicity machine and an embarrassing liability of the government," Sidney Schanberg wrote in The New York Times. "President Marcos himself admitted the press had become too sycophantic and obsequious."

GO 5 recycles what the President sees as threats. There's none of LOI 12's "compulsory unification of the graveyard" provisions. So, how do those clamping on prior restraints or threatening closure justify their "war"?

Lesson Two : "In the long run of history, the censors and inquisitors always lost," Cebu's major newspapers said. "The only weapon against bad ideas is a better one."

In his memoirs "A Guardian of Memory," the late Armando J. Malay recalls how Japanese censors sat at newsdesks to sift through copy. Few believed the propaganda they published. And underground newspapers, like Free Philippines, thrived.

Few remember it now. But Marcos' first stab at the press came with his May 1970 order to deport Chinese Commercial News editor Rizal Yuyitung and his publisher brother Quintin. A Filipino, Quintin was arrested at the old Manila Overseas Press Club.

Both were shoved into an Air Force C-47, flown to Taipei, summarily tried, sentenced and jailed. An international outcry secured their release. Canada gave refuge to Rizal, and Quintin lived in the United States until his death. Both saw the Marcos regime collapse.

Lesson Three: Press muzzlers first seek out the weakest link.

Joseph Estrada slapped a P101-million libel suit and a P2-billion BIR tax assessment on the Manila Times after it published a story on his serving as an "unwitting *ninong*" to an allegedly graft-laced P450-million power contract. The then Gokongwei-owned paper published a front-page apology. Most of the staff quit.

Encouraged, Erap next tried to smash the INQUIRER. His tool: pressuring advertisers to pull out. This attack is documented in "The Inquirer At 20." Managing editor Jose Ma. Nolasco titled his article: "Estrada pushed his luck—and lost it all."

It's recommended reading for administration "warriors." They may learn from history—and from the fact that Erap now is in the slammer.

The Daily Tribune, meanwhile, has been raided. OK. So, the Tribune is not a journalism icon. But people are discerning. The Tribune's miniscule circulation shows readers perceive it as an opposition megaphone.

But the Charter's provision against the clipping of press freedom covers all papers: good, lousy or indifferent. In a democratic society, the only permissible form of censorship is the citizen's refusal to read or listen.

"Government may not force a newspaper to print copy which, in its journalistic discretion, it chooses to leave on the newsroom's floor," Supreme Court justice Byron White wrote in 1974. That still holds in 2006.

The journalists that Marcos and Erap tried to gag were there to report their downfall. That's Lesson Four. Class dismissed.

* * *

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Whatever happened to 'never again'?

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

"NEVER AGAIN!" WAS THE CRY THAT AROSE after February 1986, a cry that might have issued from the hollow mouths of the Holocaust victims themselves. Martial law was our own equivalent of the Holocaust, notwithstanding that it did not carry with it stark images of smoke coming out of the chimneys of buildings where men, women and children had been. We have our own horrifying images of mass graves and maimed bodies alongside the grinning faces of those partying in the presidential yacht. Indeed, we have our own stark images of non-images of the faces of the disappeared, the obdurate presence of the absent, the people their loved ones would never see again.

The cry "Never again!" was so resonant it spawned entire groups dedicated to a dictatorship-watch, making sure one would never rise again. "Never again!" was even a forum in the Internet, meant to be an early warning device alerting all and sundry about the signs of a brewing tyranny.

Well, 20 years later, dictatorship is back, resurrected on the very day dedicated to commemorating its death. Twenty years later, martial law is back, raised up on the very day dedicated to its being toppled down. Whatever happened to "never again"?

As it turns out, many of those who shouted that line ferociously are now serving tamely the one person who is resolved to recycle dictatorship "ever and ever again." As it turns out, what they really meant when they said, "Never again!" was that never again would they be poor, never again would they be without power, never again would they suffer the discomforts of struggling against injustice and oppression.

History repeats itself, as they say, the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce. How very true, except that this one is a bitter farce, it only hurts when you laugh. GMA is truly a caricature of Marcos, but a most perverse one. At least Marcos won twice in presidential elections before he became a dictator and ruled the country with an iron fist. GMA has not won a single presidential election she was shoved into power by the very thing she has now decreed illegal, which is People Power, for the heroic act of hiding under the bed, or Cory's and Cardinal Sin's skirts; and she merely stole the presidency from Fernando Poe Jr.—and she has the gall to plunge this country into the darkness of martial law?

What a pathetic people we are if we will just bow our heads and accept it. Or utter that monstrous phrase with abject weariness: "Let's move on."

Whatever has turned "Never again!" into "Ever and ever again"?

I can think of all sorts of sophisticated or convoluted explanations for it, but a friend of mine has hit the nail on the head with a simple one. "What the hell has happened to us?"—she expostulated to me the other day. "Have we become a people without balls?"

That is the most direct, forceful and complete explanation for why, 20 years after we liberated ourselves from a dictatorship, we have fallen back into its clutches. No, more than that, it's the most scientific one. We've lost our balls. Or more accurately, we've allowed a small person (spiritual, not literal) who never won a presidential election to cut off our balls.

That is so in the sense of "balls" meaning pride and courage. We've lost our pride, and we've lost our courage.

The first has been unraveling over the last few years when we kept on beating our chests and ruing in doleful voices that beggars cannot be choosers, let's just choose the lesser evil, the iniquity is done, let's just move on. It's that plunging into the lowest pit of mediocrity, that settling for crumbs out of self inflicted sense of desperation, that willingness to tolerate abuse and wrongdoing that has undone us. Beggars cannot be choosers? Choosers cannot be beggars! It's the mental prison of thinking you have no choice that makes you a beggar, not the other way around.

In any case, what idiocy should possess anyone to make him suppose GMA is the "lesser evil" to anything? Of course, that was how she advertised herself in the elections (the lesser evil to FPJ) and that is how she advertises herself today (the lesser evil to any alternative). The lesser evil? Hell, a dog would be a lesser evil. At least a dog has virtues that commend it as man's best friend. You keep thinking you have no choice but to pick the lesser evil—Raul Roco was hands down a patent good in the last elections, even if his EQ was constantly at war with his IQ—and you'll keep getting the greater hell. Look where we are now.

The second, which is that we've lost the fire in our bellies, is patent today. A phalanx of anti-riot cops attacks a crowd of marchers who are doing anything but rioting and the marchers run away. A checkpoint full of soldiers stops people from marching to Fort Bonifacio to come in aid of a "beleaguered" group of Marines, as Col. Ariel Querubin put it, and they agree to stand rooted to the spot. What has happened to this country's capacity to raise a fist at tyranny? What has happened to this country's capacity to defy dictatorship?

I joked before media friends last Sunday that better the crowd at Ultra, at least they had the balls to rush forward. The crowds that gathered to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Edsa and to defend a group of Marines at Bonifacio a couple of days later had the balls only to either run away or be rendered immobile. Maybe, I said, next time we hold a rally we should announce that prizes in the form of house and lot, tricycles and cash, will be given to those who stand their ground. Looking back, I don't know if that is a joke at all.

Forget about economic recovery. Let's just recover our balls

Lagman recalls Marcos' excesses

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

AT THE HEIGHT OF LAST SUNDAY'S TURMOIL at Fort Bonifacio, rumors flew that Ilocos Norte Rep. Imee Marcos was texting furiously in an attempt to rally People Power in support of Col. Ariel Querubin. This story couldn't be confirmed, but Marcos has denounced President Macapagal-Arroyo for trying to make a poor copy of the martial law regime of her father, the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos. She also sought to equate Proclamation 1017 with Marcos' Proclamation 1081.

In a scathing privilege speech last Feb. 28, however, Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman denounced the "public outcry" of Marcos—who was a "direct beneficiary of martial law"—against PP 1017 as a "pathetic showcase of inordinate gall." PP 1017, he said, is "Lilliputian compared to the ogre of 1081."

* * *

Lagman said it was during Marcos' dictatorship that the Philippine economy became the "sick man of Asia," a "pitiful pussycat in the region of economic tigers." By the time Marcos was ousted, Lagman said, 59.3 percent of Filipino families had fallen below the poverty line, and in his region of Bicol, it was 73.2 percent. He also pointed out that when Marcos became president in 1965, our foreign debt was only $599 million, abut when he fled 20 years later, it had swelled to $28 billion. Thus, said Lagman, 20 years after the Marcoses fled, Filipino taxpayers are still paying Marcos' odious debts and they would continue to pay them until 2025. Of the country's total borrowings during Marcos' term, Lagman added, an estimated 33 percent was pocketed by him and his cronies.

* * *

But the Albay lawmaker also had reminders for former President Cory Aquino. He said there is "an apt precedent" to PP 1017 in Proclamation 503, "Declaring a State of National Emergency Throughout the Philippines," issued by Ms Aquino on Dec. 6, 1989 following several coup attempts against her. Aquino amplified PP 503 by issuing EO 384 on Dec. 12, 1989, which provided general guidelines. "What was legal then, could not be illegal now," Lagman asserted. "What was constitutional in 1989 cannot be unconstitutional in 2006 under the same 1987 Constitution."

Lagman also said the assessment of facts by GMA on the existence of a state of national emergency cannot be subject to judicial review, except if the factual determination involves a declaration of martial law or the suspension of the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus. But then, he said, PP 1017 does not, "either in language or spirit," declare martial law or suspend the writ, thus removing it from "the ambit of a justiciable issue."

* * *

Lagman also noted that many sectors have condemned PP 1017 "as wanting in legal and constitutional anchorage" and that "it would be convenient to join the chorus of popular dissent." But he said he won't do that as he views PP 1017 as "legal and constitutional, without in any way condoning any subsequent errant and unlawful acts invoking it as authority and shield."

His clear thinking is doubtless shared by other legal luminaries, even though they're not as noisy as those who are opposing it. This may be one reason why the Supreme Court has refused to issue a TRO against PP 1017 and, instead, ordered the Palace to submit its counter-arguments.

But all these may be overtaken by events. There's a prevailing sentiment among Cabinet members to recommend PP 1017's lifting by this weekend, doubtless due partly to the influence of the country's governors, such as Cotabato's Gov. Manny Piñol. He argues that the political turmoil is confined only to Metro Manila and that the rest of the country is peaceful, and the citizens want to go on with their lives. Thus, said Piñol, an emergency proclamation should only cover Metro Manila where the troublemakers are and should be lifted everywhere else.

* * *

Edsa I's 20th anniversary drew reminiscences from everywhere. One of the most interesting was offered by my friend Pete Chan, executive director of the Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs at the Department of Foreign Affairs. Then assigned to the Los Angeles Consulate General, Pete recalled Serge Osmeña III, who was then on exile in the US, waking him up by phone on Feb. 22 to tell him the rebellion against Marcos had begun and that Consul General Raul Rabe in Honolulu and his staff had joined the clamor for him to step down. Chan, as acting LA consul general, had sealed the casket of former Sen. Serging Osmeña Jr. two years earlier, and this brought him in contact with anti-Marcos stalwarts in the US. He narrated that in early 1986, a higher-ranking DFA official had just returned from Manila to take over the LA post, after having campaigned for Marcos in the February snap election. With the uprising against Marcos in Manila, this new official, however, quickly turned around and joined the consulate staff in withdrawing support from Marcos. Their defection attracted big media groups in LA. Interestingly, however, the acting consul general, to the dismay of the anti-Marcos elements, predicted on US TV and radio that a military junta headed by Lt. Gen. Fidel Ramos and Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile would take over from Marcos. When this official got tired of his vigil in LA, Chan seized the opportunity to tell the US media and the world that the consulate's personnel were fervently hoping that Marcos would voluntarily step down and that he would not be replaced by a military junta.

So, what lessons did he draw from Edsa I? Pete says it showed that as a people, "we can do the impossible, the miraculous—but only if we move as one, without any personal greed or agenda of self-aggrandizement blocking our view to national development." Whenever he's asked why we are so poor, his answer is that to lick the big "P" of Poverty, "we should have less and less of that other big 'P' which is Politics."

When media women fought back

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT THAT IS TINKERING with media freedom should learn a few lessons from the 1983 case (in the Supreme Court) of women journalists versus military officers.

The military's dreaded and intimidating moves at that time against seven women journalists, including myself, may have created a temporary chilling effect, but it did not prevent us from making bold moves to make sure it was not going to be done ever again to us or to anyone.

On Feb. 1, 1983, braving martial rule, 23 of us women writers and six male colleagues filed a "petition for prohibition with preliminary injunction" with the Supreme Court. This was to stop the military's National Intelligence Board (NIB) Special Committee No. 2 from harassing media practitioners and violating our right to freedom of expression and right to remain silent.

Named respondents were retired Brig. Gen. Wilfredo Estrada, Colonels Renato Ecarma, Balbino Diego, Galileo Kintanar, Hermogenes Peralta, Vicente Tigas, Maj. Eleanor Bernardino and NBI Assistant Director Ponciano Fernando—all of NIB No. 2.

A sudden creation of the dreaded AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Fabian Ver, the NIB was composed of high-ranking military officials tasked to "invite" and interrogate the women journalists whom they thought had written unflattering and damaging articles against the Marcos dictatorship.

Those invited for questioning were Arlene Babst, Jo-Ann Q. Maglipon, Niñez Cacho-Olivares, Lorna Kalaw-Tirol, Domini Torrevillas-Suarez, Eggie Apostol and myself. Jo-Anne, Domini, Lorna and I were then writing for the Panorama Magazine, while Niñez and Arlene were columnists of the Bulletin Today. Tita Eggie was publisher of Mr. & Ms. Magazine.

The military invitation asked us to appear before the NIB in order to "to shed light on confidential matters being looked into by this committee." The last paragraph threatened: "Your failure to appear on a specified date and place shall be considered as waiver on your part, and this committee will be constrained to proceed in accordance with law."

We were interrogated one at a time by a group composed mostly of military officers. The closed-door interrogations were done at a Fort Bonifacio hall and lasted for hours at a time. We were questioned about our motives for writing, writing fees, even our religious faith and upbringing. The military tried to cast aspersions on our motives and to link us to subversive elements.

I was questioned on my magazine feature article on military abuses in Bataan; Maglipon was questioned on her article on military abuses in Mindanao. This was the second interrogation for me, having been previously made to appear, interrogated and chastised (in a packed open hall) by Deputy Defense Secretary Carmelo Barbero on another magazine article about a Kalinga chief killed by soldiers.

(The "subversive" articles, excerpts of the proceedings and other pertinent details are in "Philippine Press Under Siege" Vols. 1 and 2.)

Refusing to be intimidated, we banded together and called on our media colleagues. Twenty eight journalists—23 women and five men—aided by 13 lawyers led by former Sen. Lorenzo Tañada, Joker Arroyo and law professor Perfecto Fernandez, went to the Supreme Court to put a stop to the intimidating interrogations.

Here are excerpts from our arguments. (Pardon the legalese.) "(The military) interrogations imposed prior restraint…in violation of constitutional guarantees on freedom of expression; in the course of said interrogations, (the military) respondents communicated emphatically to the petitioners questioned by them, the publications that are objectionable, with specification of the subjects, manner of presentation, and tenor of language, that respondents disapprove of, thereby imposing guidelines and norms to be adhered to by (media) petitioners, apart from and in addition to the norms prescribed by law."

We further argued that the interrogations created a climate of fear and a chilling effect on the practice of journalism. We added that this could result in "curtailment of the free flow of information and opinion, indispensable to the fundamental right of the people to know all matters of public concern" guaranteed in the Constitution.

"Political liberty is thus jeopardized, for … the foundation of intelligent political decisions by the people, in the exercise of their right to self-government, is free access to knowledge or information relevant to the matters for decision."

The interrogations also "constituted unlawful incursions or intrusions into spheres of individual liberty and free choice, in violation of constitutional guarantees in the Bill of Rights."

Arguing for the government, Solicitor General Estelito Mendoza tried to play things down by declaring that the petition was "moot and academic" as Estrada had ordered that the NIB No. 2 be terminated as he "was satisfied with the results."

Mendoza pooh-poohed our complaint by saying "all that has taken place is plain conversation, interchange of ideas, opinions, perhaps biases and preferences. But there is no charge against, nor any complaint of whatever nature involving the petitioners." Oh yeah?

A few months later, editor Torrevillas-Suarez and I were facing a P10-million libel suit filed by Brig. Gen. Artemio Tadiar who claimed he was maligned (although he was not even mentioned) in my Bataan article. We had a battery of lawyers, among them, Joker Arroyo, Saklolo Leano and Rene Saguisag. The case was dropped in 1986.

The Marcos military was not about to back off. But the media women were bold, if not as bold as ever, helping set the stage for the dictatorship's eventual downfall.

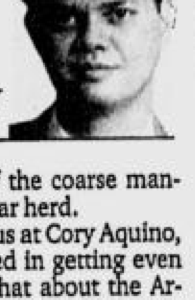
* * *

Send feedback to cerespd@info.com.ph

She is as they are

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III



THERE ARE TWO THINGS I HAVE BEEN SAYING in private since the present political crisis broke out. The first: We must assume that Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has no choice—and no other desire—but to be president for life. The second: Her presidency is being propped up by the most immovable of forces: a stubborn refusal by many Filipinos to reject her, because to do so would entail rejecting themselves.

For both reasons, it is dangerous to hold on to the romantic notion that Ms Arroyo and her supporters are susceptible to appeals to "the better angels of their nature." We face their fiendish refusal; the demon of selfish class interest has possessed them.

On the first point, does anyone really believe that even if the President makes it to June 30, 2010, she can quietly go into retirement? The most she would have accomplished by then is postpone a debacle. Bereft of presidential immunity, deprived of access to the national treasury, lacking the power to hire, promote and fire, stripped of the ability to issue orders as commander in chief, who will defend her? Who will protect her? Certainly not a Congress—or parliament—which, even today, needs all sorts of inducements just to muster a quorum. Definitely not the governors or mayors who support her now because she's dangling an extra term, election-free. Surely not the people who, her own defenders claim, are virtuously above "all the political noise." So who among the citizenry will budge even if she squeals bloody murder? No, she has to keep going, and going, and going.

On the second point. Filipinos find it difficult to reject Ms Arroyo because she embodies everything conservative Filipinos want to be, admire and respect. She enjoys social prominence; she is extremely well-educated, she is clearly capable of being cultivated, even polished; she can be elegant or, at least, handle herself without the obvious insecurity of a parvenu; she has been, in so many respects, to the Manor born. She speaks the right languages, went to the right schools, belongs to the right church, married into the right family, and is aloof—even contemptuous of the coarse manners and enthusiasms of the vulgar herd.

There are those who are furious at Cory Aquino, and who say she's only interested in getting even because of Hacienda Luisita. What about the Arroyo *haciendas*? Let's list them down: Hacienda Bacan, Hacienda Manolita. (Hacienda Grande was chopped up—most of the slices going to family members; hundreds of hectares were handed out by the President and her husband, but some farmers' groups are complaining that all they got was hot air.) Has anyone heard whether the Arroyos even attempted a stock sharing plan, or are the Arroyo tenants still living blissfully in the 19th century, resting under the shade of the generous paunch of the President's husband? All we've heard, particularly in the case of Hacienda Bacan, is the Arroyos' claim that their loving tenants want the property removed from land reform coverage. So forget about even a token land reform.

If Cory Aquino has not done enough, it's because she's not even the largest—much less the sole—owner of Hacienda Luisita. And I know for a fact that as far as she's concerned, if the government wants it, it can take it; except that her other relatives cling to it.

But set that aside for a moment and ponder this: The apologists of the President rage against communists and how evil they are; then in the same breath repeat communist propaganda about Hacienda Luisita. Can it be anything else but a smoke screen? Talk about smoke-belching.

Then again, if you cannot attack frontally, attack from the rear and at the heels. Unleash little lapdogs—like lawyer Romela Bengzon—to yip and yap at Cory's heels. (That, too, should serve as a reward for Bengzon who was one of the main sponsors of the Consultative Commission's notorious proposal to keep Ms Arroyo in power, and to expand her powers, too. The other sponsor was lawyer Raul Lambino, who replied with an emphatic "Yes" to former Sen. Vicente Paterno's pointed question as to whether their proposed amendments effectively gave Ms Arroyo the same power Marcos accorded himself in 1972. As a result, Paterno has disowned participation in the ConCom and Cha-cha.)

And if the canine behavior of the Palace pooches weren't bad enough, there are those whom a commentator calls the "Pekingese press" (a phrase apparently coined by an American journalist, Jimmy Breslin). Members of the Pekingese press, commentator Manuel Buencamino points out, find nothing wrong with asking the question: "As the world rushes aid to the victims of the Leyte landslide, why are the political players of Manila more engrossed with power grabs?" Buencamino points out such comments are "a shameless act of enlisting the dead as soldiers to protect his self-elected patroness, Gloria Arroyo." George Bush tried to do with the 9/11 dead what government apologists are doing with the Leyte victims, except that in America, the victims' families denounced Bush. It took someone of our threatened media to point out that an apologist like Alex Magno is "nothing but a maggot feasting on Leyte's cadavers." Like all others who use the Leyte tragedy to defend the President.

Says PNP Chief Arturo Lomibao: "I am trained to command with arms, rather than with words." That is the argument of the brute; the defining statement of this administration's governance. That so many are prepared to accept it says as much about them as it does about the administration proud to hear its people utter such lines. It is a society that will stubbornly defend Ms Arroyo because its members and she believe in the golden rule: Whoever has the gold makes the rules. A mentality best described by the Spanish word, "*Somos*."

Zombies and idiots?

YOUNG BLOOD

Lorraine Grace P. Rojas

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

I GREW UP IN THE COMPANY OF DOCTORS. MY PARENTS are doctors. My parents' friends are doctors. As I grew up, they were the people I saw every day. They were my family, my *titos* and *titas*, my playmates.

Since my parents had me when they were just starting out, a *yaya* wasn't in their budget. So everywhere they went, I went too: to the clinic or the hospital, on rounds or inside operating rooms, over hill and over dale. I don't think a 1st year resident can have more exposure than what I had at the age of 5.

Given this background, you could say it was a foregone conclusion where I would end up. I don't think there was really a moment when I had to tell my parents that I wanted to be a doctor. It was just a given. It's not that they didn't make sure that this is what I really wanted. I can remember them asking (as I was submitting my application for my pre-med course), with great seriousness, "Are you sure?" But that was about the extent of our discussion on the subject.

My parents definitely know how hard medical school can be. They know that they make it hard on purpose. They know that they beat you down, play with your emotions and drill you incessantly until you are a babbling shadow of your former self. So is it any wonder that they brag to anyone that their daughter is a doctor? No, excuse me, about to become a doctor?

See, that's what I am. I'm on the verge of becoming one basically. I am in medicine's no-man's land called "clerkship." Technically speaking, I'm in my 4th and (hopefully) final year of schooling. But as my father eloquently put it, "In the pecking order, the clerk is at the bottom. You are the lowest form of animal."

Yeah. See those insignificant things at the end of the line? That's us. We are the clerks. We are overworked and never paid. Heck, we're the ones who pay the hospital and the school a ridiculous amount of money to do this to us.

I wonder what all those people would think when they realize what exactly this (almost) doctor does every day—or what all their doctors once did every day when they were clerks. We run around, doing everything for everyone else. We barely sleep and when we do, it's (1) on a bench, the floor, a chair or a mosquito-infested bunk bed; and (2) punctuated by periods when we are rudely awakened to monitor a patient, assist on an appendectomy, perform CPR or run some more. We walk around like zombies in the middle of the night, monitoring the blood pressure or temperature of patients. We push wheelchairs or stretchers for people three times our size. We suffer indignities as our patients mistake us for everyone else (nurse, nurse's aide, med tech, receptionist, random people dressed in white) except doctors. We are called *ate, kuya, hija, hijo, 'neng, 'toy* and, horror of horrors, *hoy*. We measure the urine, we suction the secretions and, at the drop of a hat, we are expected to know everything.

I had one patient in the out-patient department, a college student. He watched as the consultant berated me over the physical exam I had given, my diagnosis and my proposed plan of treatment. As I turned to him with my last remaining shreds of self-respect, he whispered in awe, "*Para pala kayong nag-dedefend ng* thesis *araw-araw*."

He got it. Every patient is a learning experience and every conversation is an exam.

There are those who say we have it pretty good now. It's worse when you're an intern, a resident, a consultant—more responsibility, more work—but as a clerk, you have camaraderie, blah, blah, blah. I know they have a hard time, maybe harder than we do, but when you're at the bottom of the heap, anywhere else sounds pretty good. It's hard to have perspective when you have to crane your head just to see where you're heading. I mean, when your boss has a boss who has a boss and that boss is part of a group of other bosses, how screwed can you get? While there are those who are genuinely nice, who understand and go out of their way to help, there are others who seem to have been put on this earth for the sole reason of making your life a living hell. If anyone else was in their position, they would be on the receiving end of a hissy fit. But no, these are our superiors. Unlike them, we still have something to prove. Whoever said that we should fight the Establishment was never a clerk.

My friends think I'm a little crazy, and more than a little bit sadistic. They can't understand why I can't make it to this party or that get-together on less than a month's notice. But even on one year's notice, there's very little you can do if you're on duty on that day or if at that exact moment, your patient decides that he wants to stop breathing. When you're so tired that you forget to eat, keeping your coffee date isn't exactly the top thing on your mind.

And when you do get together? It's hard to tell your friends about your day when they can't get what exactly you do in your day. There's also that little fact that while they all have careers, salaries and live independent lives, you're still relying on your parents for almost everything—room, board, tuition and (sigh) allowance. Not to mention the fact that you're the only one still worrying about tomorrow's exams. Let's face it: this life is murder on relationships.

I suppose some people must be wondering, "Why are you killing yourself just to have two letters appended to your name? If you find it so damn hard, why are you still in the game?"

Granted, life might have been easier if I had wanted to be a kindergarten teacher, a housewife or a dancer. I wouldn't be constantly plagued with self-doubt, wondering if I can make it, if I'm good enough to be a doctor. I wouldn't dread the coming of every duty day. I wouldn't be scared shitless because some lives are literally in my hands. And I definitely wouldn't be still up at 1:30 in the morning writing this.

See, there are so many reasons for me to quit—and only one thing, one measly thing holding me back: that despite the whining and the groaning that I do, I can't think of anywhere else I want to be. Simply put, I love it. It took me a while to figure out that even if my parents were trapeze artists or even if they had seriously tried to talk me out of it, I would still be here, right now. No matter how difficult or dangerous the game, it doesn't change the fact that I love the playing field. I cannot wait for the day when, more than just playing, I get to actually call the shots.

Some would think me a complete idiot to enter the field at a time when no one wants to be a doctor, least of all doctors. But hey, if being a doctor is being an idiot, I'll gladly be a complete and utter idiot for the rest of my life.

Lorraine Grace P. Rojas, 22, is a 4th year medical student at the University of Sto. Tomas.

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Radical reforms to justify Proclamation No. 1017

IT IS LAMENTABLE THAT 20 years after the first People Power in Edsa, on the very day of the celebration of that historic event, a state of national emergency had to be declared by President Macapagal-Arroyo. To some, the declaration may be a bitter pill the nation has to swallow.

To us in the Partido Demokratiko Sosyalista ng Pilipinas (PDSP), the situation being addressed by the declaration emphasizes the country's need for radical reforms. Together with our comrades in Aksyon Sambayanan, we will be vigilantly watching where this very strong measure taken by government will bring the country.

We urge the government to immediately pursue true and meaningful reforms to justify the necessity of its tough move and bring solution to the current crisis. The most urgent reforms are those addressing corruption and poverty. Among these are:

- Political reforms, including electoral and judicial reforms, toward real people empowerment.
- Rural development anchored on an agrarian reform that emphasizes productivity.
- Industrialization that cares for the workers and makes full use of the country's human resources.
- Educational and cultural reforms toward moral transformation.
- National security measures, including strengthening the AFP and PNP.

At the same time, we call on the patriotic elements of the various sectors of Philippine society to intensify their organization, expansion and consolidation as they push for social revolution. The social revolution much needed by our society can be assured only by a broad-based social movement committed to and working for this revolution.

Our two Edsa uprisings have shown that social change driven by politicians result only to leadership change within the political elite. Military-driven change will only lead to military rule. Only people-driven change can lead to a true social revolution.

—PEPING M. LUGAY,
head,
Public Information Department,
Partido Demokratiko
Sosyalista ng Pilipinas (PDSP),
4-A Maalindog St.,
UP Diliman, Quezon City

National emergency

WHILE NINOY AQUINO LIVED TO wipe the tears off people's eyes, the Arroyo administration is creating conditions that drive people to tears. It has suppressed the freedom of expression.

After attending Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales' first Mass as prince of the Church at the Edsa Shrine last Feb. 25, I proceeded to our radio program. Upon entering Radyo Veritas, I was intimidated and shocked to see three policemen. Perhaps, this is what the government means by "national emergency."

—JOHN FRANCIS M. LAGMAN,
media liaison officer,
Urban Poor Associates,
25A Mabuhay St.,
Barangay Central, QC

Violence against children

TWO SEEMINGLY UNRELATED articles in the INQUIRER's Feb. 17 issue caught my attention: Michael Tan's "Drugs and the law"; and the news "Girl's death strikes fear in town." I personally believe they are somehow connected.

Tan's article was insightful. He correctly pointed out that much of our anti-drug campaign is focused on punitive measures rather than on addiction-prevention and rehabilitation. Indeed, most Western countries deal with addiction as a health issue—which explains the "lax" treatment Nora Aunor is getting from US courts. Here in the Philippines, we still view it through the prism of the criminal justice system.

The Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002 and the annual allotment for the Department of Health's drug rehabilitation programs (as compared to the military and police budget) show how poorly the government understands the drug problem. No wonder, in spite of the authorities' success in jailing pushers and seizing large quantities of drugs, the number of addicts in the Philippines keeps on growing: In 1992, the UN estimate was 700,000; last year, the Narcotics Command counted 8 million. We know fully well that the number is much bigger.

At the rate things are going, the war against drug abuse will go on for several decades more. Meanwhile, more children will be forced to work in subhuman conditions because their fathers will be too busy making a career out of aluminum foils and water pipes, driving their mothers insane. Others will end up as collateral damage in drug deals (involving their parents) gone wrong. Still, others will die in the very hands of their paranoid parents. Little girls will be raped and brutally murdered and found dead in garbage dumps and rivers.

This is not a new phenomenon. This is not a "Filipino curse." Two decades ago, the same tragedy happened to little children in California. A man named Randy Fitzgerald conducted a thorough investigation. In his Reader's Digest article, "A Devil Stalks the Land," he warned the whole world about the direct link between drug abuse and violence against children.

Obviously, no one among us listened. Our present approach to the drug problem lacks contingencies to protect our little children while the drug war rages.

—RAY S. NOBLEZA,
55 San Ramon, Camaligan,
Camarines Sur 4401

Sad ideas of an opinion maker

I AM EXTREMELY SADDENED that a good professor and opinion maker like Solita Monsod can behave or pretend to be a "disinterested" intellectual in these times of crises. She's old enough to know that every action is political. One's decision to join or not to join the ongoing protests is a political act and serves a purpose: (in this case) either to oust Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo from Malacañang or to keep her there. Even Monsod had her agenda when she wrote that column, so she should "get real."

People and groups of various political shades are coming together in a compromise of beliefs, to achieve the objective of ending a government in a state of lunacy. Soldiers are people like Monsod: they, too, have brain processes creating a set of principles. They are the servants of the people—not of a commander in chief. The right to rebellion is an indivisible and universal right, it is not an act of adventurism.

I joined the recent protests but in ordinary days, I push local governments to allot a percentage of their budgets for women's causes and contraceptive supplies. Sometimes, my group connects with other advocacy groups to increase government's commitment to universal education. And the context of these actions is the assumption that government is not doing enough for its people.

Not that we can be heroes and redefine the meaning of Edsa. As a development worker, I feel that GMA should step down and all Filipinos should decide to fight for freedom from fear, poverty and oppression.

—MIRIAM AZURIN-ABAJA,
miriamazuirn@yahoo.com

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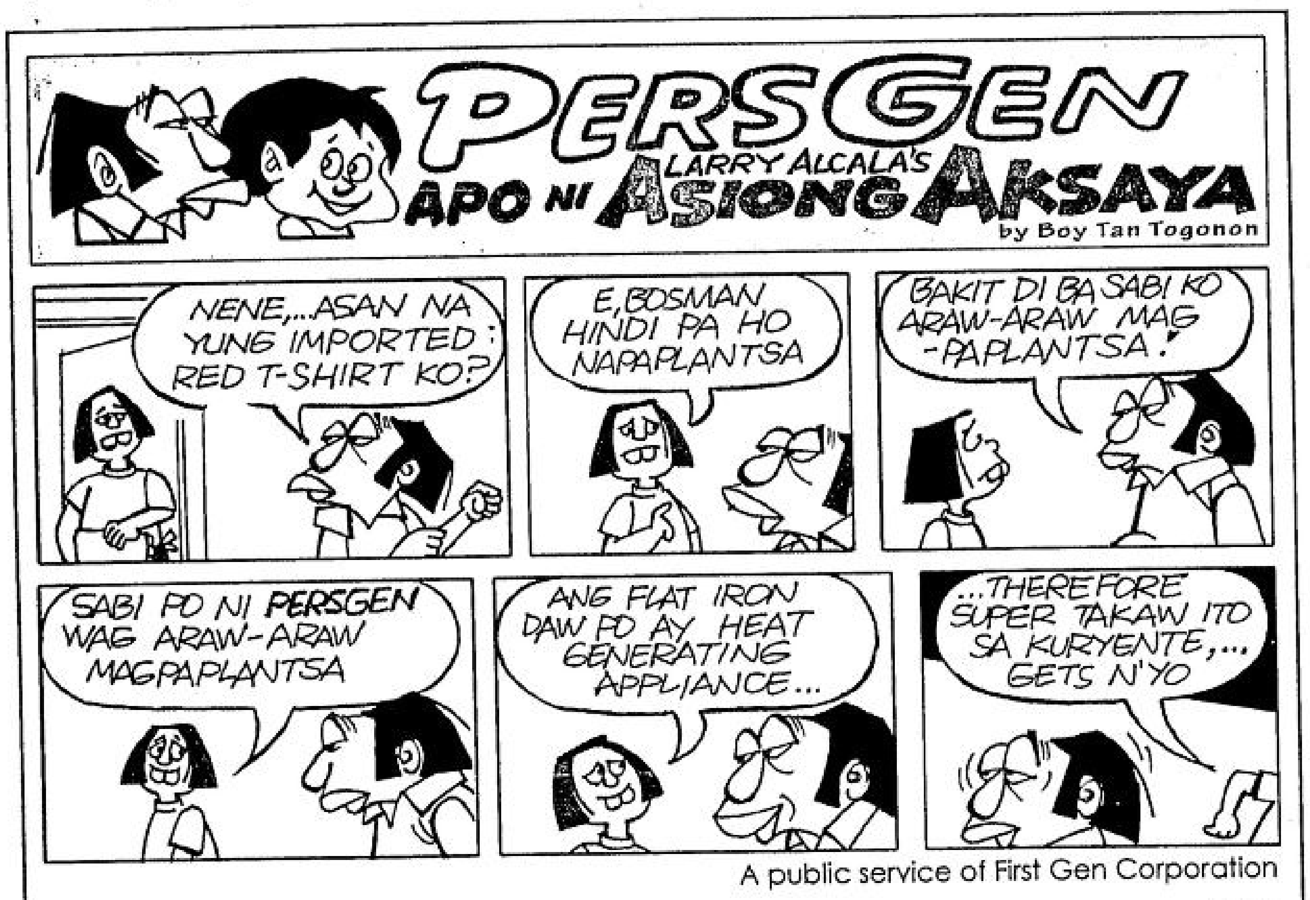
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INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Floreño G. Solmirano

New species of rare flower found

By Juan Escandor Jr.
Iriga City

A NEW SPECIES OF A rare flower known as Rafflesia exists in Mount Asog in Iriga City, according to the National Museum.

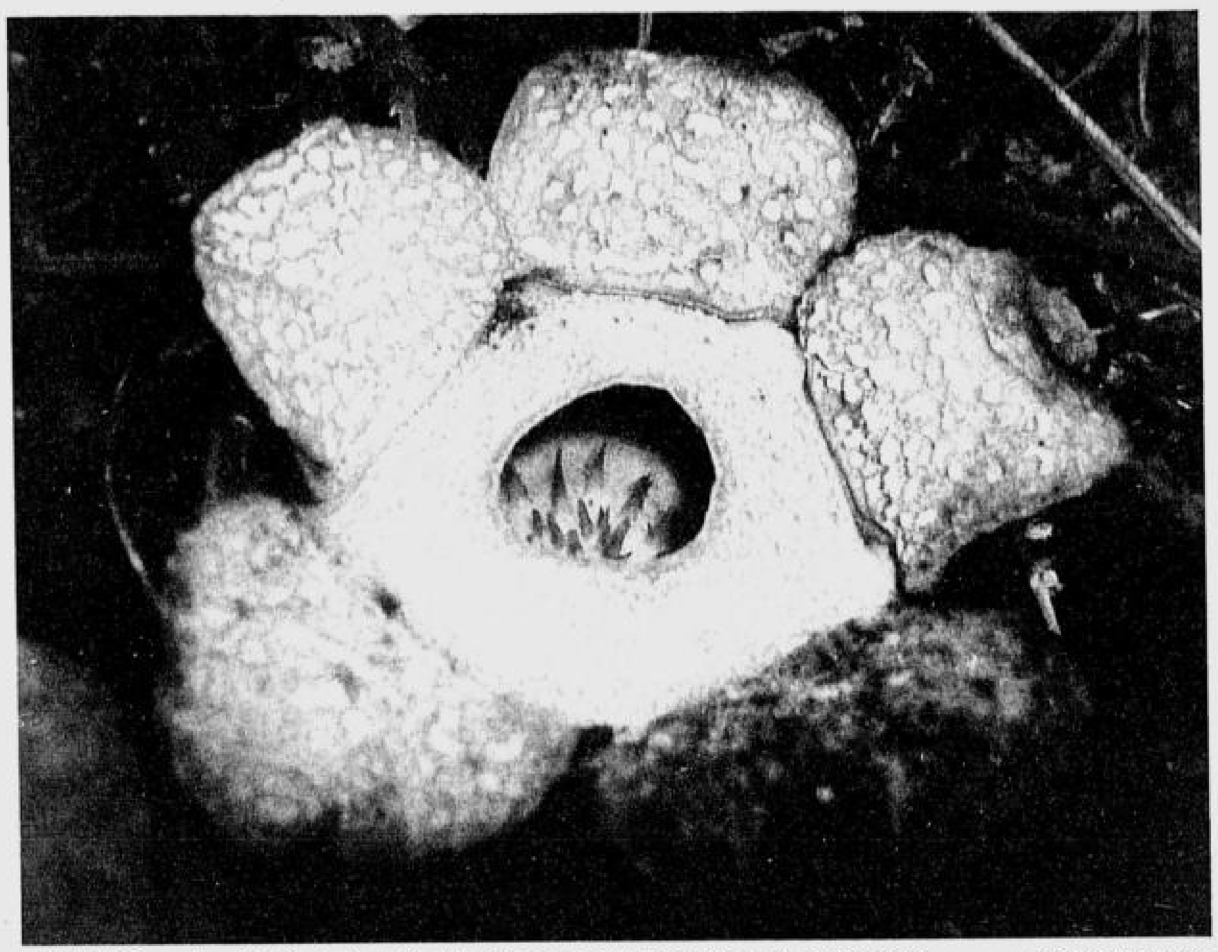
Dr. Domingo Madulid, curator of the National Museum's botany division, on Tuesday certified that the specimens presented to him was really a Rafflesia specie and proposed the scientific name *Rafflesia irigaense* under the family of *Rafflesiaceae*.

Rafflesia, the largest known flower that stinks like rotting flesh, is found only in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. Its biggest recorded size is 1.2 meters in diameter and the smallest, half a meter.

But what has been found in Asog was only 13 centimeters in diameter.

Of the 20 Rafflesia species discovered so far, four had been found in the Philippines, and the fifth and latest discovery in Asog, could be the smallest of its kind in the world.

The four confirmed species found in the country are *Rafflesia schadenbergiana* in Mt. Apo, believed to be already extinct because of deforestation; *Rafflesia speciosa* in Mt. Poras in Antique; *Rafflesia manillana* in Mt. Makiling; and *Rafflesia magnifica*, in Compostela Valley in 2003.



THE NEW species of Rafflesia found in Mt. Iriga measures only 13 centimeters wide. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Parasite

Rafflesia has no visible plant body. It appears in reddish cabbage-shaped bloom during the reproductive cycle that develops nine to ten months after the bud appears from the forest floor. The bloom lasts only for three to five days.

Named after British zoologist Thomas Stamford Raffles, who discovered the first known species in 1818 in Sumatra, the Rafflesia is a parasite that grows in a host, the tetrastigma or chestnut vine. In its early stages, the vine appears only as a tangle of fibers.

Researchers from the Camarines Sur State Agricultural College (CSSAC) have seen the flower on a trek to Asog on Feb. 9 after a group of mountaineers told them of their discovery.

Before Madulid confirmed the find, CSSAC Prof. Gertrude Girlie Jaucian-Adan said several indicators proved that what had been found in Asog was Rafflesia—the presence of the host tetrastigma vine, the habitat in the slope of rocky crevices, and its physical characteristics like the perigone warts (white dots on petals) and the shape of diaphragm.

GIRLIE Jaucian-Adan trekked to Mt. Asog to identify the flower.

Serendipity

"It was serendipity for me because I had been searching for its existence in Camarines Sur for years, considering that I had crossed out Mt. Asog from the possible places where I might discover Rafflesia," Jaucian-Adan exclaimed.

Asog couldn't possibly host the strange flower because the forest was degenerating, she said.

A day after Dominic Bagasina, a graduating education student of the University of St. Anthony in Iriga and member of the Alliance of Sumagang Outdoor Groups (Asog), found the purported latest species of Rafflesia, she was invited to lecture on biodiversity before Bagasina's group.

"The Asog members suddenly became restless and noisy when I showed them the slides of some of the most endangered and rarest species. One of them was Rafflesia," Jaucian-Adan said.

She said she asked the members what the fuss was all about and they told her that Bagasina found one. But she said she would not believe even as she was shown a photo taken with a mobile phone camera.

"I was still doubtful and teased him that he just superimposed the flower until the two of us trekked to the place where the Rafflesia blooms. I was shocked and happy to see three flowers with my own eyes after years of searching for them in other places," Jaucian-Adan recounted.

The professor-researcher took the coordinates of the exact location of the Rafflesia, brought a sample that they dissected and studied it at the laboratory of the CSSAC. She coordinated with the city government in securing the area.

Elusive

Bagasina said he was still overwhelmed by his discovery. He looked forward to the day when it could open a gateway for the conservation of Asog.

Jaucian-Adan further described Rafflesia as the most elusive flower because the mortality ratio, that is, the buds that bloom, is 75:25.

She said the flowering episode is brief, with female flowers rare and seldom than the more numerous male ones.

The flowers exude a putrid scent, attract flies and carrion loaders that pollinate and fertilize them to become developed fruits underneath the ground where forest rats and insects hunt for food, she added.

Because of its elusive characteristic, Jaucian-Adan said there is a dearth of information about Rafflesia's biology although significant scientific researches had already been conducted.

Until now, she said, no study had yet been undertaken to determine how its seeds germinate and grow and why the Rafflesia associates itself only with the tetrastigma vine.

Jaucian-Adan said the three flowers that Bagasina discovered had already wilted and decayed, but there were still 15 buds in them that she hoped would bloom.

Iriga executives want mountain declared protected area

TO CONSERVE AND protect Mount Asog (Mount Iriga) from human exploitation and abuse, local officials of Iriga City in Camarines Sur have recommended to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources its declaration as a protected area.

Asog passed the criteria to qualify as a component of the National Integrated Protected Area System (Nipas), according to an assessment conducted from Feb. 15 to March 11 last year by a DENR regional team.

Myrna G. Baylon, chief of the department's Protected and Wildlife Division, said the team's findings substantiated the recommendation for Asog to become an additional component of Nipas under the "protected landscape" category.

The city government wants the mountain declared a protected area to stop slash-and-burn farming, illegal logging and other forms of human destruction that threaten wildlife in the mountain, according to Mayor Madelaine Alfelor-Gazmen.

Among the endangered animal species found there are the black-naped oriole, white-eared brown dove, *tariktik*, owl, crow, talon, *dignos*, *sagoksok* and wild pig.

Asog can also be tapped as a major source of water for the city and Buhi town in Camarines Sur, Gazmen said. It has seven waterfalls, unique rock formations, a scenic view and a mountain peak, potentials for recreation and eco-tourism, she added.

Another reason for the mountain's protection, Gazmen said, was to prevent soil erosion, landslide and flooding that endanger lives and properties in the surrounding communities.

Elmer Sayson, an architecture student and vice chair of the Alliance of Sumagang Outdoor Group (Asog), said his group was willing to guide researchers who wanted to study wildlife species in the mountain.

He vowed to promote responsible mountaineering among the youths and make them realize the importance of biodiversity conservation. *Michael B. Jaucian and Niño Jesus Y. Orbeta*

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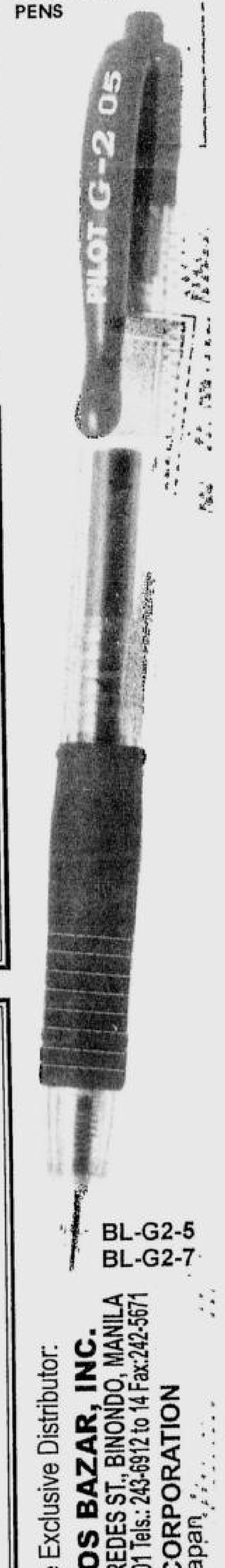

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Red leader in coup plot list already languishing in jail

A COMMUNIST LEADER listed by the Philippine National Police as among those to be arrested for allegedly plotting to overthrow President Macapagal-Arroyo has been in jail in Oriental Mindoro for more than a year now.

Senior Supt. Rolando Gonzales, warden of the Oriental Mindoro provincial jail, said Eduard "Edik" Serrano, identified as Rogelio Villanueva in the PNP list, was arrested May 2, 2004 by the Oriental Mindoro police and the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (Isafp).

He was arrested with Josephine Joy Mendoza and Rizza Mesana in a bus in Lipa City after they attended a meeting of the National Democratic Front.

But Serrano said police should not have arrested him because he was covered by an immunity agreement signed by the NDF and the government at that time.

Police said the three were members of the New People's Army.

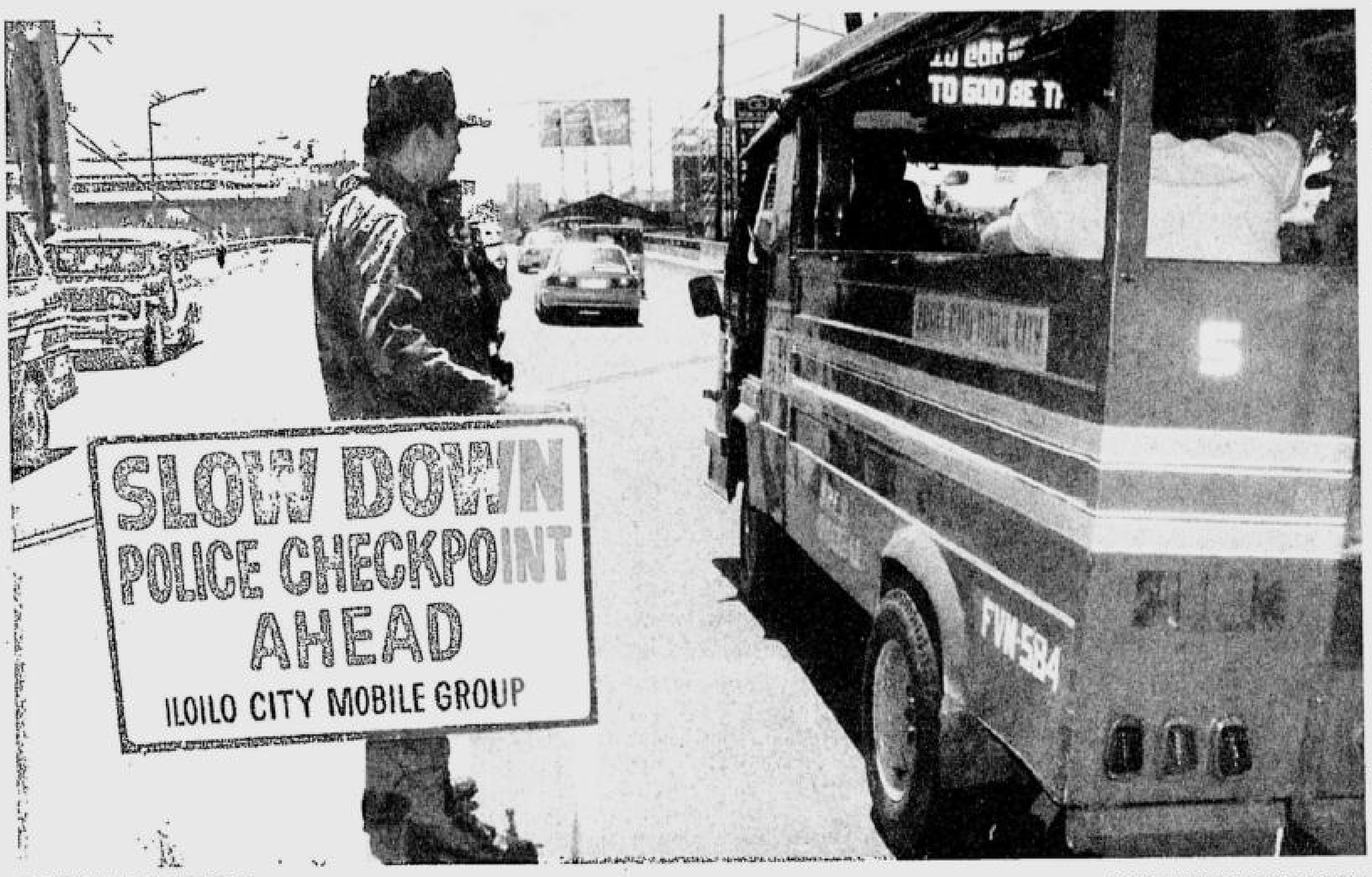
Supt. Alejandro Lapinid, then Mimaropa police chief, said Serrano's real identity was Rogelio Villanueva, allegedly the highest ranking CPP official in Mindoro.

He said "Eduardo Serrano" was just the nom de guerre of Villanueva.

Lapinid said Villanueva was a common criminal.

Serrano's relatives and friends said authorities simply wanted to pin down Serrano on trumped up charges that he was Villanueva.

Lapinid said three warrants of arrest for rebellion and frustrated murder were issued for Serrano's capture. *Marlon Ramos and Madonna Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*



ARNOLD ALMACEN/PDI VISAYAS BUREAU

CHAIN REACTION
The effects of the state of emergency declared by President Macapagal-Arroyo was also felt in Iloilo City where police set up checkpoints to intercept so-called destabilizers.

Church men to launch protests vs 1017

By Carla P. Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—CHURCH AND media groups in Negros Occidental are to mount separate activities to protest the issuance of Presidential Proclamation No. 1017 placing the country in a state of national emergency.

Bacolod Bishop Vicente Navarra said a prayer rally was planned for March 8 at the Bacolod public plaza while concerned citizens and members of the clergy in Negros would issue a statement opposing Proclamation 1017.

Navarra described Proclamation 1017 as undemocratic because it curtails the rights of the people. "Many lawyers have also expressed the opinion that it is unconstitutional," he said.

Media practitioners in the province, united under the newly formed "Article 3 Alliance," are to stage a vigil in front of the Fountain of Justice here last night to denounce President Macapagal-Arroyo's issuance of Proclamation 1017 and moves to curtail press freedom.

The alliance urged all media practitioners to wear red as a sign of protest against the threat to press freedom.

It also called on the public to stand up and join the fight to protect their rights and liberties.

The group said they decided to stage the protest on Ash Wednesday, the start of Lent, to remind Ms Arroyo that she should reflect on the need to uphold the people's rights.

The Negros media also vowed to resist all attempts of the Arroyo administration to prevent them from fully exercising their profession.

Copies of the group's statement, which the alliance is urging people to sign during the vigil, will be sent to Ms Arroyo, the Senate, House of Representatives, the International Federation of Journalists, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights.

Kin of slain Bayan Muna leader appeal for GMA help

LUCENA CITY—THE FAMILY of slain militant teacher Napoleon Pornasdoro has appealed to President Macapagal-Arroyo to give justice to his death.

"One way to lessen the grief of losing my father is for President Arroyo to order the immediate resolution of the case. The murder of my father should not just be made as another chilling index in the growing list of slain progressive leaders," said Zoe Pornasdoro, eldest daughter of the slain public high school teacher.

But although Zoe, also a teacher like her parents, admitted that her parents had been involved in the activist movement since the pre-martial law period, "he was no longer active just like before."

The victim and his wife, Beth, started their involvement in the activist movement during their college days at the University of the Philippines in Los Baños.

Zoe said that when her mother had an acute ailment in the pancreas two years ago, her father stayed away from the mass movement and concentrated on caring for his sick wife.

"We want the government to speed up the process of the investigation. We want immediate justice for my father," she said.

The remains of Pornasdoros is now in Pagbilao town.

The victim's comrades from the militant movement still recognize the victim as the leader of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) in Quezon.

Pornasdoro was walking home when ambushed by a lone gunman some 500 meters from his school late Monday afternoon.

The human rights group Karapatan in Quezon pointed to the military as the one responsible for the murder.

Army Maj. Jose Broso, spokesperson of the military's Southern Luzon Command based in Camp Nakar here, declined to comment on the killing.

Broso said they did not have any information about the killing, except for what media reported. *Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Negros silica mining shut for pollution, taxes

By Romy G. Amarado
PDI Visayas Bureau

DUMAGUETE CITY—NEGROS Oriental Gov. George Arnaiz ordered the closure on Monday of a silica mining operation in Barangay Maaslum in Ayungon town, 80 km north of here, for causing environmental and health problems in the area and for failing to pay local taxes.

Arnaiz ordered the permit of Goodyield Resources Development Inc. (GRDI) suspended because of the numerous complaints he received from Ayungon residents, including its barangay and municipal officials, regarding the alleged health hazard posed by the silica quarry operation in Barangay Maaslum.

The governor, in his letter to GRDI on Monday, also raised concern over the complaint of residents about the "negative environmental impact (it had caused) on the land, river and seas within the municipality."

He also noted that the company has stopped paying taxes to barangay, municipal and provincial governments since January.

But Joseph Lo, head of GRDI, warned that the closure might affect the supply of cement in the country since at least nine big cement factories in the Philippines are getting their supply of silica from GRDI. Silica is one of the main ingredients in the manufacture of cement.

Lo said GRDI is producing 20,000 to 30,000 metric tons of silica a month.

Lo also said that GRDI has been religiously complying with all the required measures to prevent environmental destruction in the area.

'Jueteng' substitute starts Quezon dry run

LUCENA CITY—THE MUCH-awaited rebirth of the Small Town Lottery, an old numbers game of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office that is similar to jueteng, started here on Tuesday.

Romy Quiñones, PCSO manager of special projects department, said the STL operation based here would cover the province's 40 towns.

"This is a pilot STL project. As a matter of fact, we're only on a dry run. It's not yet fully operational," Quiñones said.

He said another STL operation in Angeles City in Pampanga would also start in the coming days.

Mayor Edward Hagedorn of Puerto Princesa City, head of the national anti-jueteng task force who had pushed for the return of STL operation as the best legal substitute to jueteng, predicted that the government stood to earn anywhere from P6 billion to P10 billion a year if the latest government-sanctioned numbers game would be allowed to operate in the whole country.

The STL, which the administration of former president Corazon Aquino ran from 1987 to 1990, failed to eradicate the decades-old jueteng after it ended up being a "front" for jueteng operators and the "cash cow" of corrupt local government officials and law enforcers.

'Shameful substitute'

Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Oscar Cruz, an anti-jueteng advocate, had earlier dismissed STL as a "shameful substitute" for jueteng.

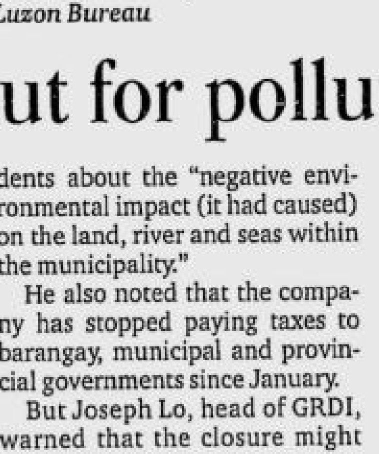
The lottery has distinct similarities to jueteng, which only has 1-37 numbers in every draws, unlike STL which has 1-40 numbers.

A P1 bet wins P70 in STL. Jueteng offers a bigger prize of P90 for every peso bet.

The PCSO granted the franchise for the STL operation in Quezon to Pirouette Corp. based in Manila.

The Sangguniang Panlalawigan allowed the company to operate the STL through Resolution No. 2005-676 dated Oct. 3, 2005.

A certain Jose Francisco Gonzales was the signatory in the Pirouette letter to the provincial council, in his capacity as corporate secretary.


S.T.L., HINDI JUETENG!
AY, MAY I.D. PALA!

Resolution

In the resolution, the provincial board said it allowed the STL operation because part of the income of the PCSO would benefit the poor by way of financial and medical assistance.

Portions of the game proceeds will also go to local government units and the Philippine National Police, among other beneficiaries.

The STL operation is expected to conduct at least three draws daily where bets will be placed on two numbers from 1 to 40.

The 17-40 combination won the first draw held after the inauguration and blessing ceremony of the new office.

Mass

Mass was held in the company premises a couple of blocks away north of the Saint Ferdinand Cathedral in the central part of the city.

Senior Supt. Vicente Caragan Jr., Quezon police chief, said with the start of the STL, which employs former jueteng bet collectors, the police could now focus their attention on fighting criminality and insurgency.

"Unlike before when we were always running after jueteng bet collectors. The STL will also erase public perception that the police are on the payroll of jueteng operators," Caragan said. *Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND BID

The PNOC-Energy Development Corporation is inviting all interested suppliers to apply and submit sealed bids for the supply and delivery of the following:

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Eligibility forms and bidding documents shall be available for issuance at the above address c/o Roderick R. Cabantog starting **March 2, 2006**, from 9:30 AM to 3:30 PM and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P400.00 per document.

For purposes of clarifying certain matters, a pre-bidding conference shall be held on **March 10, 2006, 2:00 p.m.** at the above address.

Applications for eligibility and sealed bids shall be submitted to and registered with the PNOC-EDC Procurement and Materials Management Division, at the above address and thereafter dropped in the padlocked bid box thereat not later than 2:00 p.m. (Procurement Department Office Wall Clock time) on **March 24, 2006**. Public opening of bids shall follow immediately thereafter. **Late bids shall not be accepted.**

Prospective bidders shall signify conformance to the bidding terms and conditions, as required, and shall ensure the same through proper submission/execution. Source of funding is from Internal Cash Generation of PNOC-EDC. All bids should be within the Approved Budget for the Contract in order to qualify.

PNOC-Energy Development Corporation reserves the right to annul the bidding process, to reject any or all bids, to waive any informality in the bids received and to accept such bid which is most advantageous to PNOC-EDC without thereby incurring liability to the affected bidder or bidders or any obligation to inform the affected bidder or bidders of the ground(s) for PNOC-EDC's action.

Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee II

(PDI--March 2 & 9, 2006)

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CIP Complex, Sergio Osmeña Boulevard, North Reclamation Area, Cebu City
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Telephone 232-1461 to 63 231-6858 to 57
Fax No 231-6848

AN INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID (AMENDED)

The Cebu Port Authority (CPA), North Reclamation Area, Cebu City, thorugh its Bids and Award Committee (BAC), invites all interested consultants to apply for eligibility and to bid for the **Engagement of Financial Advisor for the Corporatization and Privatization of the Cebu Port Authority**

Intresied Consultants must submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) through the BAC Secretariat on or before **March 13, 2006**

The eligibility requirements may be obtained from the BAC Secretariat starting **March 14, 2006**. Eligibility requirements/documents shall be submitted in a sealed envelope to the BAC Secretariat not later than 3:00 P.M. of **March 23, 2006**. Sealed envelopes submitted shall be immediately opened after the deadline. The eligibility of registered bidders shall be evaluated unsing a non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria based on the indicated eligibility requirements. Based on such evaluation, the BAC Secretariat will issue the list of short-listed consultants on **April 4, 2006**.

The bid documents shall be made available to all eligible and short-listed consultants by the BAC Secretariat starting **April 5, 2006** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Five Thousand Pesos (P5,000.00).

The Pre-bid Conference for all consultants who have purchased the bid documents shall be held at 3:00 P.M. on **April 12, 2006** at the Conference Room, Cebu Port Authority.

All bids should be submitted to the BAC Secretariat on or before 3:00 P.M. on **April 24, 2006** at the Conference Room, Cebu Port Authority. All bids submitted shall be opened in public view immediately after the lapse of the deadline.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be govered by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

CPA assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid. CPA reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any formality/defect therein, and to accept such bid as may be deemed most advantageous to the government.

For inquiries, please contact the BAC Secretariat at 412-9027.

(Sgd.) **MARIO G. TAN**
BAC Chairman

Noted by:

(Sgd.) **MARIANO C.J. MARTINEZ**
General Manager

*AMENDING INVITATION TO BID PUBLISHED LAST FEBRUARY 20 AND 27, 2006

(PDI--March 2 & 9, 2006)

₱3-M fake bags seized in Binondo mall

By Margaux C. Ortiz

IN THE BUREAU'S FIRST OPERATION against counterfeit Kipling bags, agents of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) seized P2.9 million worth of the fake items during a raid on two stores in Binondo, Manila last week.

NBI Intellectual Property Rights Division (IPRD) chief Jose Justo Yap identified the business establishments as Classy Bags Enterprise, located in the 168 Shopping Mall on Sta. Elena St., and another store on Jaboneras St. in San Nicolas. Yap said the owners of the establishments, identified as Mei Co and Benjamin Mallari, now face unfair competition charges.

The NBI official said the local distributors of the Belgian-made bags, through their local representative Didimus Business Proprietary Support, had complained about the proliferation of counterfeit Kipling bags in Manila. Surveillance conducted by NBI agents traced the source of the fakes to the suspects' stores, Yap added. The raid held last Feb. 22 yielded 986 pieces of assorted fake Kipling bags. "The P2.9 million is based on the average retail cost of the original products," NBI Senior Agent Dave Segunial said. The fake items did not have stuffed monkeys chained to the bags, proof that the products were genuine, he added.

Just being prudent

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

IF I WERE DEFENSE SECRETARY Avelino "Nonong" Cruz, I wouldn't have the face to show up in Malacañang the day after the standoff at Fort Bonifacio. I would have faded away.

But I am not Cruz. And I wouldn't know how he felt during those tension-filled hours.

Cruz even had the nerve to smile before the camera while walking with the President and other Cabinet officials in Malacañang the day after the crisis. The photo was published in the INQUIRER and other papers Tuesday.

The prominent lawyer-turned-defense chief was nowhere in the vicinity of the Marine headquarters, the site of the crisis.

Cruz was so different from former Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes who was in the vicinity of the Oakwood Apartelle in Makati where young mutinous Army officers holed themselves up for several hours.

Reyes was in the Oakwood premises from the start of the crisis up to the very end.

During the Fort Bonifacio crisis, Cruz did not attend meetings of the National Security Council where his presence was needed. His absence made other Cabinet members grumble.

The President had tried to reach Nonong Cruz on his cellular phone to no avail. He was sent many text messages for him to report to Malacañang or go directly to Fort Bonifacio to intervene.

He must have switched off his cellular phone. He never answered the text messages sent to him by the President.

The other Cabinet members were so angry with the defense chief one of them was reportedly heard to have commented: "He probably wet his pants."

No, I wouldn't say Cruz was a trembling coward; he was just being prudent during the Fort Bonifacio standoff.

In which case he has no business being the defense chief. He should be sent back to the Villaraza Law Firm where he would be safe with all his wealth.

* * *

Apart from the raid at The Daily Tribune offices, the Arroyo government has not done anything else to suppress press freedom in connection with Proclamation 1017.

But the Tribune has not been closed down. In fact, the paper continues to be distributed in the streets and probably has increased in circulation.

Adverse commentaries in the newspapers and in the airwaves continue to hound the President and her policies.

The INQUIRER's Conrado de Quiros and Neal H. Cruz are critical of the President more than ever. And yet they have not been arrested.

There are no signs they will ever be taken in custody.

So, is there any reason to complain that the press is being muzzled?

* * *

Remember the Cabinet member that was featured in this space last week who seems to have gotten rich in a short time?

The initial findings of a lifestyle check on him showed that the first of two luxury vehicles he now owns—acquired mysteriously—is a BMW sports car.

His second biggest acquisition since becoming a member of the President's official family is a unit in a posh condominium in Pasig City.

Conservative estimates placed the value of the unit at between P5 million and P10 million.

But his biggest acquisition is a radio station down South where he started.

The Cabinet official in question was first subjected to a lifestyle check. But the investigation stopped for unknown reasons.

Funny but his wardrobe, which consisted of a solitary leather jacket during the elections, now includes name brands like Brioni and Armani.

Targets of his past shakedowns (when he was not yet with the Macapagal-Arroyo administration) included a Filipino-Chinese suspected of being into the numbers game of "masiao."

This official didn't get the post he was eyeing during the latest shake-up of Cabinet people. Some business groups told the Boss-Lady he was incompetent.

More about him soon.

METROBRIEFS

Pushed to death?

A MAN died in Las Piñas City on Tuesday when he fell and hit his head on the pavement after a neighbor allegedly pushed him. Wilfredo Santiago died of severe head injuries and broken ribs, P03 Eduardo Rodaje said in his report. The suspect, Eduardo David, told the police that he pushed Santiago because the latter was allegedly unruly and drunk. Witnesses, however, told the police that David also hit the victim with a piece of wood. The suspect was charged with homicide at the city prosecutor's office yesterday.

Jocelyn R. Uy

More supporters for park

WINNER Foundation has gained more supporters in its advocacy to save the Arroceros Forest Park in Manila. Regina Paterno, the president of the foundation, identified the groups as the Concerned Citizens Against Pollution (Cocap), Tanggol Kalikasan and Haribon Society. The environment groups of different schools, including Miriam College's Miriam Peace and De La Salle University's La Sallian Institute for the Environment, also promised to do their share. "Miriam Peace is sending out girls for our cleanup drive," Paterno said. "We need more people to look after the forest park on a regular basis to make sure that the city government would not continue destroying it," she added. On the other hand, Ester Perez de Tagle, founder of Cocap, said her group is willing to help Winner Foundation in its legal fight against the Manila City government. "We'll help them in the legal aspect," De Tagle said. "Actually, we intend to look at all the environmental cases being filed."

Tina G. Santos

March off to fiery start

A FIRE hit a junk shop in Taguig City yesterday, the first day of Fire Prevention Month. The incident also happened just a few hours after fire fighters went around the city to remind residents to be vigilant in preventing fires. Investigators said the fire started at 12:35 p.m. after someone set fire to a pile of dried leaves which was beside the junk shop. The fire destroyed P50,000 worth of property before it was put out nearly an hour later. No one was reported injured or killed in the incident. Officials, meanwhile, expect a surge in fire incidents this month due to the hot weather. According to Fire District 3 records, 292 cases or most of the fires that occurred in the southern part of Metro Manila last year, were electricity-related. This was followed by 147 incidents caused by open-flame cooking; unattended cigarettes, 121 cases; bonfires, 25 cases; flammable liquid, 11; liquefied petroleum gas, 7 and fireworks, 1.

Jocelyn R. Uy

English fluency seminars

THE CORPORATE Mind has announced the schedule for Joscephine Gomez's Prescriptions for English fluency seminars: March 4-5 and 18-19, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., and March 6-9, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. The seminars will be held at the City and Land Mega Plaza on ADB Avenue corner Garnet Road, Ortigas Center, Pasig City. Gomez is a former faculty member of one of Europe's leading communication schools, the Intensive Kreative Lernen Komunications Training Center in Germany. For details, please call tel nos. 6877898, 6378787 or 0919-8763770.

C5 flyover load limit raised

By Leila B. Salaverria

MORE VEHICLES CAN NOW USE THE C5-Katipunan flyover in Quezon City after the load limit on the structure was raised to 10 tons by the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) last Friday. Before that, only vehicles which weighed below five tons were allowed on the flyover.

When the structure was built, the load limit was placed at 32 tons but this was lowered to five tons when the supports of the 180-meter, six-lane flyover were damaged and weakened after a fire in December razed about 300 shanties underneath.

DPWH Undersecretary Manuel Bonoan said on Tuesday that the load limit was increased to 10 tons after the department put up steel supports under the flyover to strengthen it while waiting for its repair to begin. Vehicles above the limit, however, would still have to take the alternative routes set by the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority.

Bonoan added that the DPWH, together with experts, tested the flyover's capacity before it decided to slightly raise the load limit last week. The DPWH has hired Taiwanese experts to determine whether the whole structure, or just the damaged portions, should be repaired. The repair would roughly cost P150 to P180 million, based on earlier estimates.

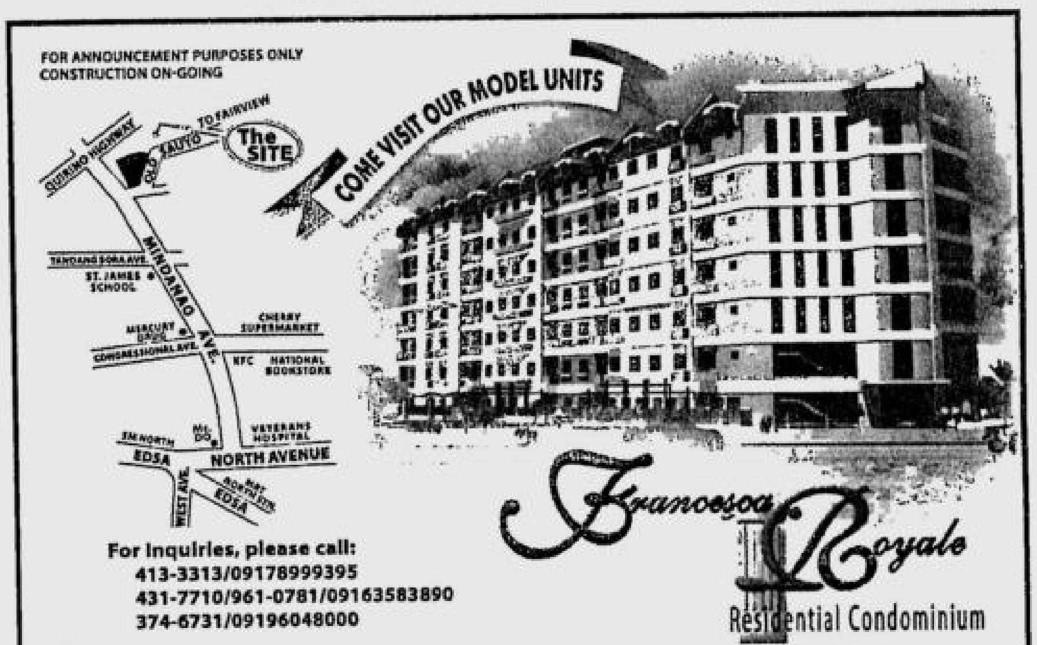
More taxi bays for QC urged

By DJ Yap

HAILING A TAXI IN QUEZON CITY MAY SOON be as easy as lining up and hopping in.

City Councilors Restituto Malangen, Rommel Abesamis, Eric Rey Medina, Francisco Calalay Jr. and Janet Malaya have filed an ordinance establishing loading and unloading zones in crowded places like malls and train stations around the city.

Under the proposed measure, certain areas in public places shall be designated as taxi bays, where the cabs and passengers can queue up in an orderly manner. Some of these areas are the SM malls in North Edsa, Fairview and Cubao, Gateway mall and Farmer's Plaza, also in Cubao; Ever Gotesco mall on Commonwealth Avenue, the Quezon City Hall and MRT Quezon Avenue station.



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ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
San Miguel Avenue, Pasig City

IN RE: APPLICATION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ELECTRIC POWER PURCHASE AGREEMENT (EPPA) BETWEEN BENGUET ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. (BENECO) AND MIRANT (PHILIPPINES) ENERGY CORPORATION, WITH PRAYER FOR PROVISIONAL AUTHORITY.

ERC CASE NO. 2005-051 RC

BENGUET, ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. (BENECO),
Applicant.
x-----------------------x

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES:

Notice is hereby given of the filing by Benguet Electric Cooperative, Inc. (BENECO) on November 29, 2005 of an application for approval of the electric power purchase agreement (EPPA) between itself and Mirant (Philippines) Energy Corporation (Mirant), with prayer for provisional authority.

Said EPPA has a cooperation period of twenty (20) years on a take-or-pay basis with an energy off-take of 81,468,000 kWh per Billing Year or 81,691,200 kWh during leap years except in the first and last Billing Year of the Cooperation Period. In these years the quantity of electric energy to be delivered shall be determined following the definition of "Billing Year" in Article I of the said Agreement, provided that the SELLER and BUYER may agree to increase the above quantities upon mutual consent.

Likewise, under Schedule 7 of the said EPPA, during the Capital Recovery Period of the first (5) years of the cooperation period, the electricity fee to be paid by BENECO to MIRANT for each billing month shall in all cases be equal to and never greater than the rates chargeable by National Power Corporation (NPC), as if the latter is the sole supplier of electricity of BENECO.

The Commission has set the application for hearing on March 17, 2006 (Friday) at two-thirty in the afternoon (2:30 P.M.) at DPS Compound, Baguio City.

All interested parties who may wish to comment on or oppose the said application should file their comments and/or oppositions on or before the date of hearing. Such parties who may wish to have the details of the application and who shall have manifested to the Commission their desire and intention to participate actively in the proceedings, may request that before the date of hearing, they be furnished with copies of the application by the applicant, which is hereby directed to furnish the parties making such request with copies of the application and its attachments. Likewise, any such interested party may examine the application and other pertinent records filed with the Commission during the usual office hours.

WITNESS, the Honorables OLIVER B. BUTALID, JESUS N. ALCORDO, RAUF A. TAN and ALEJANDRO Z. BARIN, Commissioners, Energy Regulatory Commission, this 16th day of February, 2006 at Pasig City.

(Sgd.) MARIA TERESA A.R. CASTAÑEDA
Executive Director III

(PDI - Feb 25 & March 2 2006)

Republic of the Philippines
ZAMBOANGA CITY SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE AUTHORITY
San Ramon, Zamboanga City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

RE-BIDDING FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF ONE (1) LOT 69 KV TRANSMISSION LINE

The Zamboanga City Special Economic Zone Authority (ZCSEZA) requires the construction of a 69 KV sub-transmission line from structure number 21 of PERMEX transmission line in Ayala to ZAMBOECOZONE First Industrial Park, with a total distance of 4.4 circuit kilometer, in a 65-footer pre-stress concrete poles in a vertical construction standard utilizing silicon post insulator in a 336.4 ACSR conductor. Likewise, installation of a circuit breaker and disconnect switches at TRANSCO Tulungatung tapping point, to include line rehabilitation of PERMEX Line Structure # 11 to Structure 21.

1. The Zamboanga City Special Economic Zone Authority (ZCSEZA), through the Corporate Operating Budget 2005 intends to apply the sum of **FIFTEEN MILLION SIXTY-ONE THOUSAND SIX HUNDRED TWENTY-TWO & 64/100 PESOS ONLY (15,061,622.64)** being the Approved Budget for Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for **"Re-bidding for the Construction of One (1) Lot 69 KV Transmission Line"**. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.
2. The Zamboanga City Special Economic Zone Authority (ZCSEZA) now calls for the submission of Letters of Intent (LOIs) from potential Bidders to apply for eligibility for the **"Re-bidding for the Construction of One (1) Lot 69 KV Transmission Line"**. Bidders should possess a valid PCAB license applicable to the above type and cost of the contract, have completed a similar contract with a value of at least fifty percent (50%) of the ABC, and meet the other minimum eligibility requirements stated in the Eligibility Documents. Interested Bidders must submit their LOIs and secure the Eligibility Documents upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of **Two Hundred Pesos (P200.00)** on **March 15-20, 2006** at the **BAC Secretariat, 2nd Floor, ZAMBOECOZONE Administration Building.** Applications for eligibility will be evaluated on a "pass/fail" basis. The last day for the submission of the accomplished Eligibility Documents shall be on the date of the opening of Eligibility Documents on **March 28, 2006 at 10:00 a.m.** at the **Audio Visual Room, 3rd Floor, ZAMBOECOZONE Administration Building, San Ramon, Zamboanga City.** Only those Bidders passing the eligibility check will be entitled to purchase the Bidding Documents
3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted, unless otherwise stated, to organizations with at least seventy-five percent (75%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines. In accordance with the IRR-A of R.A. 9184, only Bids from eligible Bidders will be opened. In accordance with the IRR-A of R.A. 9184 a contract will only be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder who was determined as such during post-qualification.
4. Interested Bidders shall submit their accomplished Eligibility Documents to the **BAC Secretariat, 2nd Floor, ZAMBOECOZONE Administration Building** on or before **March 28, 2006 at 10:00 a.m.**
5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by Bidders that passed the eligibility check upon the presentation of the Notice of Eligibility to the BAC Secretariat, at the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of **Two Thousand Five Hundred Pesos (P2,500.00)**. The Biding Documents shall be received personally by the bidder or his authorized representative on **March 28 - April 19, 2006.**
6. The Zamboanga City Special Economic Zone Authority (ZCSEZA) will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all Eligible Bidders on **April 7, 2006 at 10:00 a.m.** at the **Audio Visual Room, 3rd Floor, ZAMBOECOZONE Administration Building, San Ramon, Zamboanga City.**
7. Eligible Bidders must submit their Bids at the address below on or before **April 20, 2006 at 10:00 a.m.** All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in the form of Cash, Certified Check, Cashier's Check, Manager's Check and in an amount of **One Hundred Fifty Thousand Six Hundred Sixteen Pesos & 23/100 Only (P150,616.23)**, GSIS Surety Bond in the amount of **Three Hundred Seventy-six Thousand Five Hundred Forty Pesos & 57/100 (P376,540.57)** or an equivalent amount in a freely convertible currency. Late Bids shall not be accepted. Bid opening shall be on **April 20, 2006 at 10:00 a.m.** at the **Audio Visual Room, 3rd Floor, ZAMBOECOZONE Administration Building, San Ramon, Zamboanga City.** Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidder's representatives who choose to attend at the address below on **April 20, 2006 at 10:00 a.m.**
8. Completion of the Works is required by One Hundred Twenty (120) Calendar Days.
9. The Zamboanga City Special Economic Zone Authority (ZCSEZA) reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

(Sgd.) GEORGINA PANTALEON-YU
Chairman and Administrator
Zamboanga City Special Economic Zone Authority
Administration Building, San Ramon, Zamboanga City
(062) 992-0409, (062) 993-0209
E-mail. Ecozone_bac@yahoo.com

(PDI - March 2 & 9, 2006)

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM
East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City
Tel Nos. (632) 920-6401 * (632) 920-6446
E-mail. sssemail@info.com.ph * Website http://www.sss.gov.ph

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Bulk Purchase of Supplies and Materials for the 1st Semester of CY2006

1. The *SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM*, through the Office Services Department Bulk Purchase intends to apply the sum of P31,605,767.65 being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the Purchase of Supplies and Materials for 2006 1st Semester Bulk Purchase Requirement on a per category basis broken down as follows:

Category		Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC)
✓ Paper and Paper Products	-	P 7,650,556.45
✓ EDP Supplies/TSF	-	P 9,715,733.05
✓ Computer Supplies/Ribbons	-	P 4,580,844.80
✓ NIP Printer Consumables	-	P 2,609,948.15
✓ Printed Forms	-	P 6,659,238.00
✓ Other Supplies	-	P 389,449.20
	TOTAL	P 31,605,767.65

2. The *SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM* now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for Supplies and Materials for 2006 1st Semester Bulk Purchase. Delivery of the GOODS is on a staggered basis but not to exceed four (4) months after the signing/receipt of purchase order. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, Instruction to Bidders (ITB).
3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section I of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure, on a per item per category basis.
4. Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the *SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM* and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8 AM TO 5 PM.
5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by Interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee based on the highest ABC among the category where the bidder intends to participate in as follows:

Category		Amount of the bidding documents
✓ Paper and Paper Products	-	P 5,000.00
✓ EDP Supplies/TSF	-	P 5,000.00
✓ Computer Supplies/Ribbons	-	P 2,500.00
✓ NIP Printer Consumables	-	P 2,500.00
✓ Printed Forms	-	P 5,000.00
✓ Other Supplies	-	P 500.00

The method of payment will be on a cash basis, payable at the SSS Cashiering Department, SSS Main Bldg. Ground floor, upon accomplishment of SSS Form R-6. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.

6. The *SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM* will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on March 10, 2006 at 2:00 p.m. at the Green Room, 12th Floor, SSS Main Bldg., East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City.
7. Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered at the Green Room, 12th Floor, SSS Main Building on March 24, 2006 not later than 2:30 p.m. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in a form and amount indicated in the Bid Tender Documents. Late Bids shall not be accepted.
8. Bid opening shall be on March 24, 2006 at 2:30 p.m. at the Green Room, 12th Floor, SSS Main Bldg., East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the given address.
9. The *SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM* reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Bids and Awards Committee
The Secretariat
6th Floor, SSS Main Building
East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City
Tel # 922-2991, 924-7380, 920-6401 local 5491
Email – bac@sss.gov.ph
Facsimile number – (02) 924-7380

THE CHAIRMAN
BIDS & AWARDS COMMITTE

(PDI - March 2, 2006)

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TIME OUT
A family takes a leisurely boat ride in a lagoon inside the Manila Zoo. RAFFY LERMA

7 mayors face raps for using dumps

By Blanche S. Rivera

FIVE METRO MANILA MAYORS and two other local executives from Bulacan and Cavite provinces have been charged with violating the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, the first batch of local government officials to face a complaint for continuing to operate garbage dumps beyond the Feb. 16 deadline.

Charged in the office of the Environment Ombudsman on Tuesday were Manila Mayor Lito Atienza; Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr.; Rodriguez (formerly Montalban, Rizal province) Mayor Pedro S. Cuerpo, San Mateo Mayor Jose F. Diaz and Navotas Mayor Tobias Tiangco. Also included in the complaint sheet were Obando (Bulacan) Mayor Zoilito Santiago and Cavite City Mayor Bernardo S. Paredes.

The charges were filed by the Ecowaste Coalition, composed of the environmental groups Bangon Kalikasan Movement, Buklod Tao Foundation, Cavite Green Coalition, Montalban Environmental Protection and Development Council, the November 17 Movement and Sining Yapak.

The coalition said the mayors "brazenly" violated Republic Act (RA) 9003 or the Ecowaste Law by refusing to close down the open and controlled garbage dumps in their areas. RA 9003 called for the closure of all open dumps on Feb. 16, 2004 and controlled dumps by Feb. 16 this year.

There are 734 open dumps and 264 controlled dumps still operating in the country. Only 126 of the 1,617 cities and municipalities have converted their waste facilities into sanitary landfills.

"The mayor respondents have ignored the prohibition on dumping long enough. It is time that they are made to answer for their failure to implement RA 9003 for the benefit of public health and the environment," Ochie Tolentino, of the Cavite Green Coalition, said in a statement.

According to the coalition, Manila has continued to use Pier 18 as a transfer station for garbage from Manila and Navotas, which are carried by a barge across the river and thrown into the 11-hectare Tanza controlled dump on the border of Obando and Navotas towns.

The Tanza dump, which is surrounded by fish ponds, receives 800 tons of trash daily. Active leachate from the dump threatens nearby fishponds in the fishing community, it added.

Garbage from Quezon City, on the other hand, is taken to the 33-year-old Payatas dump, part of which caved in after heavy rains in 2003. The 22-hectare facility accommodates 2,200 tons of waste daily. The Rodriguez dump, considered as a sanitary landfill but which environmentalists claim is ill-equipped to be one, receives 1,200 tons of trash from Metro Manila daily.

Return of recovered cash stalled

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE FAMILY, WHICH THE POLICE said "wrongly received" the P49,000 in cash rescuers recovered from a "Wowowee" stampede victim in Pasig City on Feb. 4, is willing to return the money to the children of the "real owner."

However, they need two more weeks to raise the money because they had already spent half of the P49,000, Eastern Police District (EPD) Investigation Unit head Chief Insp. Rolly Vilar told the INQUIRER.

Vilar earlier asked the children of stampede victim Aurora Soriano, whom he said had "wrongly and prematurely" received the P49,000, to return the money to the children of victim Virginia Javierto.

During a meeting Monday night at the EPD annex office, Soriano's daughter, Shirley, promised Javierto's daughter, Estrellita, that she would return the money.

But Shirley asked if she could return just half of the P49,000 because they had already spent half of the amount. Estrellita objected and demanded that the entire amount be returned.

"They later agreed that Shirley would return the entire amount within two weeks. Otherwise, Estrellita threatened to file estafa charges," Vilar added.

Pasig City Rescue volunteer Candy Lacno found the money inside the pocket of an elderly woman while looking for identification cards from those killed during the stampede.

When she saw Soriano's identification card, she turned over the money to the victim's son. Two days later, Javierto's son claimed the money was their mother's. Police later said the money had been turned over to the wrong family.

The conclusion was backed by video footage from a bank showing Javierto and her daughters withdrawing P50,000 before going to the PhilSports Arena.

Blast rocks Ermita; no injuries

By Margaux C. Ortiz

A BLAST ROCKED A BRIDGE IN front of a university in Ermita, Manila yesterday afternoon but disgruntled students, not terrorists, were probably behind the incident, the police said.

The incident occurred on the Balete Bridge in front of the Adamson University on San Marcelino Street.

"It was just a small explosion," SPO4 Ricardo Magbanua said, adding that nobody was injured during the explosion which was believed to have been caused by a pillbox.

The university's security guards told police investigators that the suspects were probably former students who had been expelled for violating school rules.

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SEAG champion Amit joins World Women's 9-ball tilt

AMIT aims for the big bucks and international acclaim.

AP

RUBILEN AMIT, A DOUBLE GOLD medalist in the 2005 Southeast Asian Games, and Johanna Dee are competing in the 2006 WPA Amway Women's World 9-Ball Championship which started yesterday at the Taipei Stadium in Taiwan.

The five-day event ending on March 5 offers a $70,000 total pot and boasts a strong field headed by defending champion Kim Ga-young of South Korea, Jennifer Barretta of the US, Helena Thornfeldt of Sweden, Lynette Horsburgh and Valerie Finnie of Britain, Yukiko Hamanishi of Japan, Wendy Jans of Belgium and the host country's Chun-Chen Chen, Sha-Han Chang and Hsiang-Ling Tan.

The 24-year-old Amit, who ruled the 8-ball and 9-ball singles in the last SEAG, and Dee are playing under the auspices of billiards patron Aristeo "Putch" Puyat and Billiards and Snooker Congress of the Philippines (BSCP) president Ernesto "Ernie" Fajardo.

Amit, winner of the 2002 Asian 8-Ball Championship in Singapore, made local history by becoming the first woman to qualify in the National Open men finals after an unbeaten run in the fourth leg of the qualifying round.

She is also the first Filipina to qualify in the tough Japan Open 9-ball tournament in the mid '90s after beating consistent Asian Games and SEA Games medalist Lee Van Corteza in the qualifying round held in Manila.

Dee is the playing captain of the 2005 SEAG ladies' team.

The 26-year-old Kim, known as the "Seoul Sensation" and "Little Devil Girl," is also the reigning US Ladies Open and APA Ladies Open titlist.

The winner of the event brings home $20,000, with the runner-up getting $10,000. The losing semifinalists receive $5,000 each. *Marlon Bernardino, contributor*

PSC to appeal '06 budget today

By Musong R. Castillo

THE PHILIPPINE SPORTS Commission will pursue its appeal to the Department of Budget and Management for at least a budget of P104 million for the year during a hearing in the lower house today.

The DBM had cut the PSC budget to only P28 million for 2006 and the government sports agency is seeking the aid of the legislators to have this jacked up to at least the level of last year's allocation.

"We have friends in the House of Representatives who are very concerned," PSC chair William "Butch" Ramirez said. "The DBM cut our budget and only a bicameral decision can change that."

RAMIREZ

Ramirez clarified that it was not the Senate which slashed the PSC budget this year. The P28 million that was published, Ramirez added, was the amount approved by the DBM.

The Philippines won the overall title in the Southeast Asian Games for the first time last year despite the PSC taking a further slash in its budget compared to the P200-plus million during the time of Eric Buhain.

"I am confident that we can get the support of the House," Ramirez said. "After that, we will just have to wait for our schedule in the Senate and we'll go from there."

Meanwhile, PSC commissioner Richie Garcia yesterday admitted that the agency is having a difficult time making a number of National Sports Associations liquidate their advances dating back to 2001.

Garcia also said that there are at least two NSAs—cycling and volleyball—who have changed the names of their associations and are likely to escape the liquidation requirements of the PSC.

The Philippine Amateur Cycling Association is now the Philippine Cycling Federation and the Philippine Amateur Volleyball Association is now the Philippine Volleyball Federation.

Cycling and volleyball have more than P6 million and P5 million unliquidated advances, respectively.

The PSC said that no additional funding will be released to NSAs with unliquidated advances, but changing the name of NSAs, Garcia admitted, is a way around the new PSC rule.

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AUF, WNC cagers stay unbeaten

LEGAZPI CITY—ANGELES UNIversity Foundation and West Negros College continued to show impressive forms with lopsided victories yesterday in the 60th National Students Basketball Championship at the Albay Astrodome here.

The AUF Great Danes routed local squad Divine Word College, 111-67, while the WNC Mustangs whipped another Region V squad in Aquinas University, 101-62.

AUF and WNC showed the way in Groups B and A, respectively, with three straight wins in the tournament organized by the Basketball Association of the Philippines in cooperation with the Albay provincial government and the city of Legazpi.

The Big City teams, however, stayed in contention in this event sponsored by Air21 Express, Burlington Socks, Healthy Options, ML Kuarta Padala, Baker's Fair and Summit Mineral Water.

Defending champion University of Perpetual Help-Rizal swamped Eastern Visayas State University, 114-52, and trailed WNC with a 2-1 record.

National University also bounced back from an opening-day shocker with two wins, the last a 102-62 dumping of the San Pedro College of Business and Arts.

Meanwhile, in Daet, Camarines Norte, Zamboanga City's Southern City College surprised favored Cebu's Salazar College of Science and Technology, 97-89, at the start of the secondary championship at the Agro Multi Purpose and Recreational Center.

But Cebu's other team, University of Southern Philippines, proved too much for University of Batangas, 123-60.

In other matches, Iloilo Central High Shool leaned on Jayson Salvado's three triples in the final six minutes to beat Davao City's Emar Learning Center, 85-74, while St. Claire Academy of the National Capital Region whipped Tacloban City's Asian Development Foundation College, 122-64.

M Lhuillier new BAP chair

LEGAZPI CITY—THE BASKETball Association of the Philippines named Michel Lhuillier, a well-known businessman-sportsman from Cebu, as its new chair recently.

Lhuillier was elected unanimously during the 60th BAP National Congress held at the Cagsawa Hall of the Albay Astrodome here following the resignation of Quinteliano "Tiny" Literal.

The Congress was held simultaneous with the opening of the 60th National Students Basketball Championship.

Councilor Raul "Yayoy" Alcoseba was elected the new BAP vice president for Visayas.

NBC, Prime Channel ink partnership

BONDED BY THEIR DESIRE TO PROMOTE regional basketball in the country, National Basketball Conference and Prime Channel recently inked a deal making the latter NBC's official cable partner.

NBC secretary general Tito Palma and Prime Channel program director Bob Novales signed the Memorandum of Agreement at the NBC office in Quezon City.

"We're glad to continue being part of NBC's plan of reaching out to the real basketball fans all over the country," said Novales.

NBC games and highlights will be aired on Prime Channel through cable providers including Destiny (Channel 64), Sky Camanava, carriers in Las Piñas, Parañaque and most parts of Cavite.

"This is our third year working with Prime Channel and it's a pleasant partnership," said NBC president Nathaniel "Tac" Padilla. "Come our opening on March 10, basketball fans can again expect more intense competition and better coverage."

Tagaytay City Mayor and NBC executive vice president Bambol Tolentino will host the North Division opening on March 10 while Pagadian City Mayor Sammy Co will host the Southern Division inaugurals on March 17.

REVTEX ROCKET: Glenn Aguilar shows the form that made him beat New Zealand star James Robinson twice in the Pro 125 of the 2006 Supercross International Championship Series at the RBL Stadium in Talisay City, Negros Occidental recently. Aguilar, nicknamed the Revtex Rocket due to his speed and high-flying moves, has nine national crowns and a FIM Asia Pacific championship.

Nat'l coach rues RP Open postponement

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE DECISION TO POSTPONE THE FIRST Philippine Open badminton championships will hurt the country's short-term recovery plan, national head coach Errol Chan said yesterday.

Chan said the Open, which is supposed to be the country's coming out party in the international badminton circuit, will also help determine the players of the new national squad.

He noted that 20 national-level shuttlers have already signed up for the Open, which was supposed to be held this week but had to be postponed following the government's declaration of a state of national emergency.

Chan said it's unfortunate that the Open got relegated to the far end of the International Badminton Federation calendar sometime in September.

"It is in the guidelines of IBF that any host country that announced a state of emergency, the event will have to be automatically postponed," he said.

Chan said he would just push through with his own selection process in picking players 25 years old and younger who will be sent to Malaysia for an intensive two-month training and competition stint.

The newly installed coach said they are looking at fielding a solid team in the Asian Games in December as well as in the Philippine Open in September.

"We don't want anybody telling us that they got denied slots in the Open," said Chan. "Unlike in the Southeast Asian Games, we can field as many players as possible in the Open."

SPAIN CHESSFEST

Gonzales shares top spot

FILIPINO INTERNATIONAL MASTER JAYSON Gonzales beat Garry Quillan of England to share first place with two others in the fifth round IX Open International Malaga de Ajedrez Tuesday night in Malaga, Spain.

Gonzales, eyeing his third and final GM result, boosts his total to 4.5 points, the same output of overnight leaders GM Slavko Cicak of Sweden and Slovak IM Marko Tratar, who drew their top board match.

Filipino GM Nelson Mariano II was forced to a draw by Francisco Miguel Terron Elena of Spain to score 3.0 points and share 22nd to 41st places.

In the fifth round, Gonzales will tackle Cicak while Mariano will battle Spanish Jeronimo Liñan Baena.

Lawyer Samuel Estimo, secretary-general of the National Chess Federation of the Philippines, said he's hopeful that Jayson will finally nail down the GM title.

Marlon Bernardino

Coach E opens Alabang branch

COACH E BASKETBALL SCHOOL BRINGS personalized and quality basketball training to the south as it announced the opening of its branch at the San Beda College Alabang in Muntinlupa City.

International Basketball Academy (IBA) and Coach E instructor Xavy Nunag said the new venue was due to the strong clamor from parents and kids from south of Metro Manila.

The new branch covers the areas of Muntinlupa, Cavite, Laguna and Batangas. Coach E classes are also being held at The Zone in Makati and the clubsixfifty in Libis, Quezon City. The initial eight sessions at the venue inside Ayala-Alabang Village will start in May. Interested individuals and groups may contact 631-1195 or 0921-7562639 and email address iba_phil@yahoo.com.

Actual registration will be held at the clubsixfifty from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on March 18 and 25. Leveling of entries is set April 21 and 22.

UP Vanguard golfest today

THE UP VANGUARD NATIONal Commanders Cup will be played today at the Ayala Greenfield Golf and Leisure Club in Laguna.

The 18-hole golf tourney aims to boost the campaign for a renewed interest on the Reserved Officers Training Corps.

Royal Capital Securities Corp. is major supporter of the event organized by The UP Vanguard Inc., the alumni organization of the UP ROTC Corps of Officers.

Hole-in-one sponsors are Turf Company/Club Car, Euromotors Corp., Josol Home Décor Industrial Improvement Center and CICI General Insurance Corp. Hole sponsors include Ace Hardware and Southeast Asia Foods, Inc. while half hole sponsors are No Fear, Camp John Hay Dev't, Corp., Alexander's Wear, Levi's Strauss Phil., Inc., VGD Lino Magpantay, VGD Winston Tony Santos, Rep. Francis Nepomuceno, Antonio Evangelista of New Kanlaon Construction, lawyer Elardio Pasamba and Air21/Corporate Air.

A Club Car, a kinetic Moped 50cc bicycle, a Jacuzzi and P50,000 are among the hole-in-one prizes. There will be a lot of tournament and raffle prizes including a trip to Boracay for two with three days and two nights stay at Club Panoli.

The UP Vanguard aims to motivate the youth to take up ROTC courses and install the values of patriotism and love of country.

SHOWTIME
Racing
LAROSS

NEW RECORD RUN: "Showtime" posted the new AAP national record for All-Motor Category of 11.004 seconds. Car owner Popoy Rosales (right, holding the trophy), tuner Pam Tolentino (second from left) and driver Adelbert Ayroso (2nd from right) were behind the success of Showtime.

PBA strong as ever

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

IT DOESN'T GET ANY BETTER THAN this.

The PBA has quickly gotten a replacement for Shell in Welcoat. If that's not brick-wall confidence in the league, what is?

The PBA has quickly recaptured Leo Austria, generally considered the most celebrated coach in the league's 2004-2005 season for having steered the virtually starless Shell to heights during his short coaching stint. The soft-spoken Austria has been hired to coach Welcoat, a team that has practically won all PBL titles in sight long before it bought the Shell franchise.

The five-peso formula to reiterate the league's time-tested mission to serve the best interest of its fans did miracles. It translated, among others, into consistent overflow crowds that's never been seen before in the 30-year history of the loop.

And now this, another overseas PBA game to spice up the concluding conference of the season. Surely, that March 19 game in Hong Kong featuring Talk 'N Text and Purefoods makes for a corpuscled statement from the league since the Hong Kong bash will only mark the second time that the PBA gets to play an official game in its calendar outside Philippine shores.

Wasn't it only a while ago when doomsday advocates predicted the inevitable collapse of Asia's first play-for-pay loop, triggered mainly by what many called the entry of Fil-Shams?

Well, it hasn't happened, it isn't happening.

In contrast, things have been looking up and indications point to more smashing successes for the PBA under commissioner Eala and newly elected chair Ely Capacio.

As I keep saying here, you just can't put an institution down that easily. The PBA is here to stay because, through the years, it's been a well-run conclave composed mostly of some of the finest, most respected corporations in the land.

***

I was in Davao City for the 59th edition of the PAL Interclub Golf Championship when Marie Angeline, the beautiful daughter of Dave and Jenny Floro, celebrated her 18th birthday with pomp and gaiety on Feb. 24 at the Grand Ballroom of the Alabang Country Club. Had I been around, I would have attended the occasion if only in fond memory of Danny Floro, the late, well-loved grand daddy of Marie Angeline.

To those too young to know, Danny Floro was the main architect of the two PBA Grand Slams won in 1976 and 1983 by Crispa, the basketball team managed almost flawlessly by Danny, whose legendary charm and charisma have remained unequalled to this day.

My felicitations go to Dave, who is more than a brother to me, and Jenny for having produced a wonderful daughter in Marie Angeline.

Danny Floro would have been proud.

***

Oftentimes, the boxing fans are the hardest to please. For example, many of them were displeased when Brian Viloria could only score a points victory over Jose Antonio Aguirre in retaining his WBC light flyweight crown recently in Las Vegas, Nevada.

I know the reason: Because they saw Viloria score an easy, first-round knockout victory in his last fight, they were almost cocksure he'd repeat the feat—a knockout victory, no less.

But boxing is so unpredictable a sport that, oftentimes, what is generally expected to happen does not happen. Clay knocking Liston out in 1963 was not expected. Hagler knocking Hearns out in 1987 was not expected. And Pacquiao knocking Barrera out in 2003 was not expected. In short, boxing is almost the most unexpected of all sports.

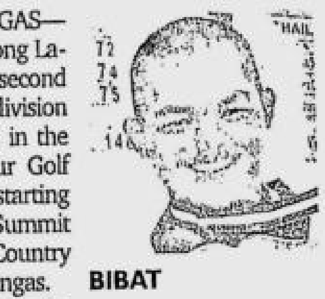
So, stop fretting, please?

Anyway Viloria is the champ, is our champ. That should put the issue to rest.

***

Comments to menju@pldtdsl.net

Samsung Am grand finals on at Summit



BIBAT

LIPA, BATANGAS—lucky substitute Jong Laput bids for a second championship division title in four years in the Samsung Amateur Golf Tour grand finals starting today at the Summit Point Golf and Country Club in Lipa, Batangas.

But Laput will need a lot more than luck to achieve his goal as he goes up against four of the best amateur talents in the country in a 72-hole battle for the crown in this culmination of a nationwide circuit that is expected to be full of action and drama.

Three of them—Mike Bibat, Tonton Asistio and Erwin Vinluan—are his teammates with Manila Southwoods while the fourth, Boyet Saragosa is a vital cog of the Canlubang squad that recently ruled the PAL Interclub in Davao.

Bibat, a member of the gold medal-winning Southeast Asian Games team, sets out as the man to beat while the 16-year-old Asistio is the player most likely to pull off a surprise.

Laput, winner of the national finals of the inaugural edition in 2003, is coming in as a replacement for Terence Macatangay who can't make it due to academic pressure at the University of Oregon where he is a golf scholar.

"Considering that they are just coming from a big battle like the PAL Interclub should put them in the right shape to shoot low rounds," said Boy Blue Ocampo of the organizing Professional Sports Management Group.

Philippine Airlines, the official carrier, flew in the provincial entries of the Samsung Tour from its qualifying points in Pueblo de Oro and Bacolod. The other backers are Tokyo Tokyo, KZG, Microtel, Coppertone Sport, Srixon, Sunbolt, Rudy Project, C-Lium Fiber and Sports Plus.

Madrigal posts back-to-back wins

MADRIGAL attributes her success to new mentor, former world champion Terry Fullerton.

ALESSANDRA MADRIGAL, DRIVING for ING Private Banking, swept the penultimate and final rounds of the KT Invitational 2006 karting series held over the weekend at the Carmona Circuit in Cavite.

The 10-year-old karting prodigy stamped her class over a field of veterans led by 2004 Karter of the Year Matteo Guidicelli, two-time Rotax Max World Championship campaigner Marlon Stockinger and eventual series champion Indy Villalon.

Madrigal, who has campaigned extensively in Southeast Asia during the past year, started the final race in fifth place then chased the pacesetters. During the 25-lap race, she kept up with the furious pace set by Stockinger, Guidicelli and Villalon before slipping past to take the checkered flag for her first win in the series.

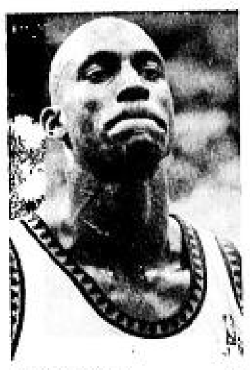
In last Sunday's final event, Madrigal engaged Guidicelli in a race-long battle that saw her swap leads with the former national karting champion. She set a time of 46.886, which was surpassed by Stockinger (46.835) on the last lap. Madrigal crossed the line .482 of a second ahead of Guidicelli to chalk up her second win in the series.

Madrigal attributed her results to her mentor and former world karting champion Terry Fullerton. "I've learned more from Terry in a couple of sessions than in the two years I've been racing."

Villalon secured the overall championship with 156 points. Madrigal finished second with 143.

NBA fines Garnett, Wallace

NEW YORK—MINNESOTA TIMBERWOLVES All-Star forward Kevin Garnett was fined $5,000 by the NBA for throwing a ball into the stands, the league said on Monday.


GARNETT AP

WALLACE REUTERS

The ball hit a fan in Sunday's game against the Memphis Grizzlies, but the fan was not seriously injured, The Star Tribune of Minneapolis reported.

Garnett said he threw the ball after becoming frustrated with the officiating in the game, which Minnesota won, 105-99. He was ejected because of the incident and later apologized to the fan.

"By no means was I trying to hit a fan," Garnett said.

The NBA also fined the Timberwolves' Ricky Davis and the Detroit Pistons' Rasheed Wallace $5,000 each for separate incidents, the league said.

Davis was fined for kicking a ball into the stands at the end of Friday's game with the Denver Nuggets.

Wallace was penalized for elbowing Cleveland Cavaliers center Zydrunas Ilgauskas on the head.

Reuters

NBA on SOLAR: 10 a.m.—Philadelphia vs. Houston (replay at 8 p.m.)

Bulls claim costly win vs Timberwolves

HOWARD: Wasted heroics AP

CHICAGO—KIRK HINRICH scored a season-high 30 points and tied a career high with 13 rebounds Tuesday for the Chicago Bulls in a costly 111-100 victory over the Minnesota Timberwolves in which forward Malik Allen was taken to a hospital with an apparent head injury.

Chicago also lost guard Chris Duhon to a bruised jaw after he took a shot to the face in the second quarter.

Hinrich hit 10 of 18 shots and finished with nine assists as the Bulls snapped a two-game losing streak.

Luol Deng added 24 points and 10 rebounds and Andres Nocioni scored 20 points.

Kevin Garnett led the Timberwolves with 27 points and 12 rebounds. Rashad McCants and Marcus Banks scored 18 apiece as Minnesota lost for the 10th time in 13 games.

Allen was injured when he rotated to guard a driving Rashad McCants 20 seconds into the second quarter. As he fell backward, Allen's head banged into teammate Darius Songaila's knee.

Allen remained on the floor for several minutes, and his neck was immobilized before he was carted away. As he left the court, Allen moved his arms and raised a fist. He was taken to Rush University Medical Center.

In Seattle, Ray Allen scored 33 points and the SuperSonics held off a major fourth-quarter rally to beat the New Orleans Hornets, 114-104.

Playing its first home game in 16 days, Seattle won for just the third time in the last 13 games. But what looked like a rout turned a little exciting in the final period.

Seattle led by 23 late in the third quarter, only to watch the Hornets pull within three late in the fourth. The Sonics scored 15 of the final 23 points to finally pull away.

Allen missed only one shot in the first half en route to 20 points, and Rashard Lewis added 25 for the Sonics, who had all five starters score in double figures.

Rookie Chris Paul led the Hornets with 25 points and 14 assists and Rasual Butler added 23 off the bench, including a club record-tying five 3-pointers in the fourth quarter.

In Los Angeles, Kobe Bryant had 28 points and eight assists to lead the Los Angeles Lakers over the Orlando Magic, 102-87.

Smush Parker added 17 points and seven assists for the Lakers (29-28), who took control of the game with a third-quarter scoring burst.

Lamar Odom had eight points, 12 rebounds and five assists as Los Angeles climbed back above the .500 mark. Chris Mihm and Brian Cook had 12 points apiece in the Lakers' balanced attack, Kwame Brown had 11 and Ronny Turiaf 10.

Grant Hill, obviously getting over the sports hernia problem that's dogged him, led the Magic with 23 points on 6-of-9 shooting from the floor. Dwight Howard had 15 points and nine rebounds for Orlando, which lost for the ninth time in 10 games.

AP

Hantuchova survives Czech opponent

DOHA, QATAR—FIFTH-SEEDED DANIELA Hantuchova labored to a 7-6 (4), 5-7, 6-1 win over Kveta Peschke of the Czech Republic on Tuesday in the first round of the $600,000 Qatar Open.

The 14th-ranked Slovakian took two hours and 48 minutes to overwhelm her. opponent—sending down eight aces to set up a second-round meeting with China's Li Na.

The 22-year-old Hantuchova said she was disappointed with her opening to the game but pleased she fought back.

"I made the second set very difficult for myself, but I managed to turn it around in the third," she said. "That was the best part of my match today."

In the first set, Hantuchova broke Peschke in the seventh game, but the Czech leveled the score at 4-4 in the next game. Hantuchova forced the set into a tiebreaker, which she won, 7-4.

Ai Sugiyama of Japan beat Tunisian wildcard Selima Safr, 6-3, 6-3, in 68 minutes, setting up Wednesday's second-round match against two-time champion Anastasia Myskina of Russia.

Eleni Daniilidou of Greece defeated Spain's Anabel Medina Garrigues, 6-4, 6-3, in a little under two hours, firing four aces—three of them in the second set.

Maria Kirilenko, the 23rd-ranked Russian, demolished Li Ting of China, 6-2, 6-4, in 80 minutes, while Marion Bartoli of France beat Indian qualifier Shikha Uberoi, 6-0, 7-6 (5).

The top four seeded players—Amelie Mauresmo, Nadia Petrova, Francesco Schiavone and Myskina—will be in action for the first time Wednesday after first-round byes.

AP

Sampras: 'Yes, Federer's just like me'

ROME—ALL THOSE COMPARISONS BEtween Roger Federer and Pete Sampras are right on the mark. Sampras himself says so.

"They're all very valid: Not only is he winning majors, but the way he's winning them—with pretty much ease. He's pretty much the favorite in every major for the rest of his career," Sampras said in a telephone interview with The Associated Press.

"Clearly, he's head and shoulders above the rest. I don't see anyone pushing him over the next three or four years."

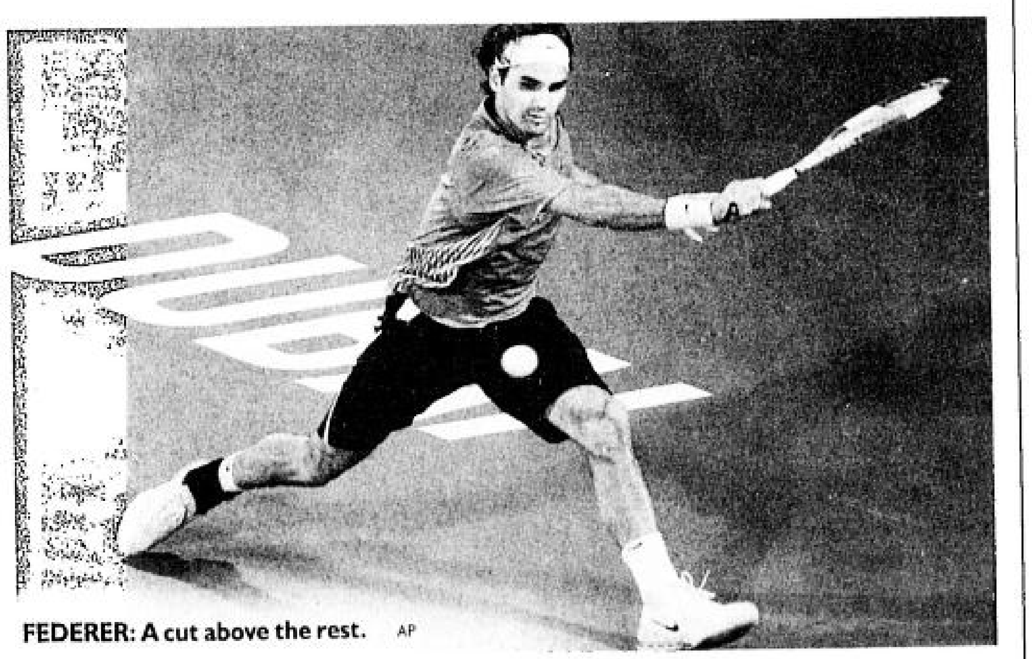
Sampras knows his record of 14 Grand Slam tournament titles could very well be threatened by Federer, who has seven so far. Time for the 34-year-old Sampras to come out of retirement and try to add to his total? Not quite.

Sampras is returning to the tennis court, though, signing up for the World Team Tennis Pro League—a 30-year-old US circuit.

"This is more about just getting myself a little busier and focused on something I used to be good at," he said ahead of Wednesday's announcement by the league.

His last professional match was the 2002 US Open final, when he beat longtime rival Andre Agassi. While it's tough for him to watch Wimbledon, where he won seven championships, Sampras keeps tabs on the game.

And he's impressed by the No. 1 Federer.


FEDERER: A cut above the rest. AP

"He's gotten to a point that when he's not at his best, he's finding ways to win, and that separates him from the rest," Sampras said.

In Dubai, Federer validated Sampras's claims by beating fellow Swiss Stanislaus Wawrinka, 7-6 (3), 6-3, in the $1 million Dubai Open Men's Tennis Championship Tuesday.

In other matches, Rafael Nadal beat France's Paul-Henri Mathieu, 6-7 (5), 6-1, 6-2 while Marat Safin returned from a six-month layoff to beat third-seeded Nikolay Davydenko.

Showing no signs of the knee injury that sidelined him since last August, Safin rallied against fellow Russian to win, 4-6, 6-2, 6-2.

AP

De La Hoya, Mayorga trade verbal barbs

BEVERLY HILLS, CALIFORNIA—With their fight more than two months away, Oscar De La Hoya and Ricardo Mayorga are tuning up with some verbal sparring.

OYA VS MAYORGA
GER ZONE
AY 6, 2006
MAY 6
DE LA HOYA
MAYORGA
DE LA HOYA (left) to Mayorga: I'm gonna knock you out. Believe it. AP

The 33-year-old De La Hoya has said he hopes to close out his career with the May 6 bout against Mayorga, and a grand finale against either Floyd Mayweather Jr. or Felix Trinidad in September.

Mayorga, a wild-swinging WBC champion from Managua, Nicaragua, talked a great game on Tuesday, saying that he intends to spoil De La Hoya's plans.

"This clown sitting here to my right has disrespected me," the animated Mayorga said at a news conference. "He keeps saying that he's going to be fighting in September or October, like he's fighting a nobody in May.

"I'm the champion. You've got to recognize that. My strongest hand is my right hand. You see his eye? I'm going to detach his retina," Mayorga said through a translator.

"I recognize that at one point that you were a great champion. But I'm going to prove on May 6 that you have nothing left in the tank. You remind me of an old lady that's past her prime that should be sitting home in a rocking chair doing nothing."

De La Hoya sat staring coldly at Mayorga.

After Mayorga said he was going to bust up De La Hoya's face, the two traded shoves before others quickly stepped in to separate them.

When De La Hoya's time at the podium came, he spoke in a measured tone.

"This will be," he said and then took a long pause, "the fight of my life. I've never had any anger, toward anybody, or disrespect, except for one man out there who got knocked out," De La Hoya said, ostensibly alluding to Fernando Vargas. "This guy here, May 6, believe me, he will get knocked out.

"He's throwing fuel at the flame. I'm not a talker at all, but inside the ring, he's going to pay."

Again staring at Mayorga, De La Hoya added, "I'm not afraid of you at all, nothing. Fighters are not afraid. But inside the ring, I'm going to knock you out. Believe it."

AP

SPORTSWATCH

Mighty Kings notch second victory

THE MIGHTY Filter Kings squeezed past Apsco Steel, 76-74, to lead the Amateur Basketball Association (ABA) Championship Tuesday at the Tanduay Gym in Quiapo. Royd Tan completed a three-point play in the final eight seconds to lift the Mighty Kings to their second straight win in as many outings. Veteran Dominic Uy and Terence Tang preserved Tan's heroics by breaking Apsco Steel's last offensive play. "Everybody delivered, I hope we can sustain our winning run," said assistant playing coach Pat Aquino. "Royd showed he has the heart." Uy also shone for the Mighty Kings with 15 points, including a trey and a three-point play in the last two minutes, and 10 rebounds. Tang also finished with 15 points.

MCC active chess begins March 5

THE MCC 1950 below active chess gets under way on Sunday, March 5, on the lower second floor of St. Francis Square located behind SM Megamall in Mandaluyong. Up for grabs is a total pot of P12,000 with the champion getting P4,000 courtesy of Arzaga-Mendoza law firm based in Alabang. Registration fee is P250. The first 80 participants will be given free T-shirts also donated by Arzaga-Mendoza law office. Call 826-8560 and 0916-852-1069 or 0922 539-7392.

Roligon entries breach 200 mark

THE NUMBER of entries for Roligon Mega Cockpit's newest blockbuster, Largahan 5 -cock derby, has breached the 200 mark as of yesterday. Host Rolly Ligon said the event, slated March 11, 14, 16 and 18, offers a guaranteed prize of P2 million for an entry fee of P4,400. The fastest win champion will drive home a brand-new Toyota Vios. For inquiries, contact 851-2275, 833-1638 and 852-9812. The sponsors are Thunderbird Enertone and Lakpue Drug Inc.

Metro Table Tennis League March 4

MORE than 100 players will be joining the first Metro Table Tennis League national open team event scheduled March 4-5 at the Harrison Plaza Shopping Mall. The event is organized by 23rd Southeast Asian Games bronze medalist Julius Esposo and sponsored by Emperador, Rep. Salacnib Baterina of Ilocos Sur, Multistar and Angel T. Heredia. Among the men's entries are coach Noel Gonzales of Letran, former national players Johan Ramaneses, Rodel Valle, Leo De Leon, Ting Ledesma, Richard Ching, Kiby Colins, Henberd Ortalla and Michael Baldonando.

Mindanao Federation 4x4 series

THE FIRST leg of the Mindanao 4x4 Federation Races sponsored by Petron Rev-X is scheduled March 4 and 5 in the City of Malaybalay, Bukidnon. Dubbed the 2006 Kaamulan Offroad Challenge, the event is part of Bukidnon's Kaamulan Festival supported by Gov. Jose Ma. R. Zubiri and hosted by Team Malaybalay led by Ray Anthony Ramos. Mindanao's top off-roaders will see action on a natural race track of the Kaamulan Grounds prepared by Irwin Bragat. Armando Quiamco will serve as the event's chief marshal.

CHESS BACKER: Gov. Victor F. Ortega of La Union hands over the sponsorship check of the 5th La Union Open Chess Championship, slated on Mar 3 to 9, to chess federation secretary general Samuel Estimo. With them are (from left): Henry Orejudos, provincial budget officer; Ramon Ortega, executive assistant to the mayor; Joseph Dumuk, tournament director; Pablo Ortega, San Fernando councilor; Francis Estigoy, provincial treasurer; Cathy Franco, assistant provincial budget officer; and Flor Tesaluna, provincial accountant.

RACING TIPS

BY TOP CHOICE

Race 1—(Penta/Tri)—Screaming Eagle (2), Modern Classic (8), Just Joshua (5), Reign Of Roses (9), Magic Dancer (3)

Race 2—(Tri)—Lolita (2), Vickyval 91), Successful Dream (3)

Race 3—(Qrt/Tri)—Sense of Justice (3), Good Day (6), Noble Win (1), Kitana (2)

Race 4—(Qrt/Tri)—Kilimanjaro (7), Bunker Buster (2), War Hero (1), Earth Wind N'Fire (5)

Race 5—(Penta/Tri)—Mischievous (7), Detective Daryll (4), Twiggy's Charm (2), Brutus (3), Yo Tero (8)

Race 6—(Qrt/Tri)—Play It Again (5), Divine Right (6), Express Strike (1), Magic Bullet (7)

Race 7—(Qrt/Tri)—Espirikitik (6), Queen's Abbey (7), Quant Je Puis (5), Overture (4)

Race 8—(Super 6/Qrt/Tri)—Spoiler (6), Premiere Event (10), Cunning Eagle (1), Pasirit (2), JJ's Friend (3), Ikaw Lamang (5)

THE FAST AND THE FURIOUS: For most of the year, they were almost always—literally—in the driver's seat. Thus, the country's top racers receive their Golden Wheel trophies for their achievements last year. Honored were (left to right)—Pepon Marave, AF3; Jody Coseteng, Touring Cars; Glenn Aguilar, Motocross; Albert Monte de Ramos, 4x4 Off-Road; Jolet Jao, Road Racing; Leo Joel Cordero, Drag Racing; Lee Bumgarner, father of Michelle Bumgarner, Karting; Daryl Flores, Slalom, and Ross Jamison, Southeast Asian Karter of the Year. ROMY HOMILLADA

Se's 'bum' knee voids Giants-Express trade

By June Navarro

HOMER SE'S SURGICALLY-REPAIRED knee failed to pass the scrutiny of several team doctors yesterday, voiding a trade between Air21 and Purefoods.

The Giants thus returned the volatile, 6-foot-5 power forward to its sender, Air21, after doubts were cast on the health of Se's knee, which had already undergone a major operation early in his career.

Air21 coach Bo Perasol said Dr. George Canlas of Purefoods suggested that Se might not be fit to play for the Giants next conference, pointing out that the surgical procedure on the player's left knee was done improperly.

The player was sent to a San Miguel physician for a second opinion, but the assessment was still the same.

Se had gone under the knife to repair an anterior cruciate ligament tear on his right knee which he suffered while playing for the Cebu Gems in the defunct Metropolitan Basketball Association.

He underwent a second ACL operation in December 2004 supervised by Dr. Gary Eufemio.

A magnetic resonance imaging screening on Se's left knee also revealed a miniscal tear but Air21 team physician Jun Rafanan claimed surgery wouldn't be necessary.

Rafanan also said the tear could in no way aggravate the operation on the left knee.

"There's no need for an operation to correct that tear," Rafanan told the INQUIRER. "It only needs strengthening exercises to get it back in shape. In fact, that tear is already 80 percent healed."

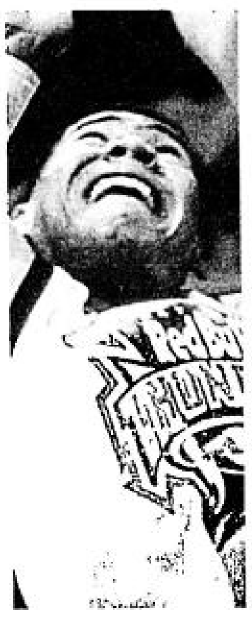
With Se heading back for the Express, the Giants will reclaim the 2006 second-round pick they had given up in the exchange for the cager. Eugene Tejada, who was shipped along with Se to Purefoods, will also return to the Air21 camp.

The Purefoods-Air21 trade was an offshoot of a swap between the Express and San Miguel Beer. The Express sent Wesley Gonzales for the Beermen's 2006 second-round pick and Eugene Tejada before dealing Se and Tejada to Purefoods.

"If I could have my way, Homer would be better off with Purefoods," said Perasol.

The bungled deal was a devastating blow to the Giants, who lost power forward Jondan Salvador to the injury list.

Salvador ruptured his right knee during the PBA Fiesta Conference Finals won by Red Bull. Salvador is out for the season since it will take nine months for the former PBL MVP to heal completely.



SE PDI PHOTO

Gabi gets ready for title match vs cocky champion

FILIPINO DIOSDADO "PRINCE" Gabi, who will attempt to become a world champion on Sunday, leaves today for Sta. Ynez, California for his 12-round bout with Vic Darchinyan.

Gabi will try to unseat the Australian flyweight champ at the Chumash Casino Resort.

The brash-talking Darchinyan will defend his IBF and IBO titles against the soft-spoken southpaw from Davao City, who is bidding to give the country another world title following the successful WBC light flyweight defense of Fil-Am Brian Viloria recently.

So confident is Darchinyan he said he would let the Filipino decide when it's time for his rival to get knocked out.

The Chumash Casino Resort, which is a two-hour drive from the Wild Card Boxing Club, is located in Santa Barbara County in California between Los Angeles and San Francisco.

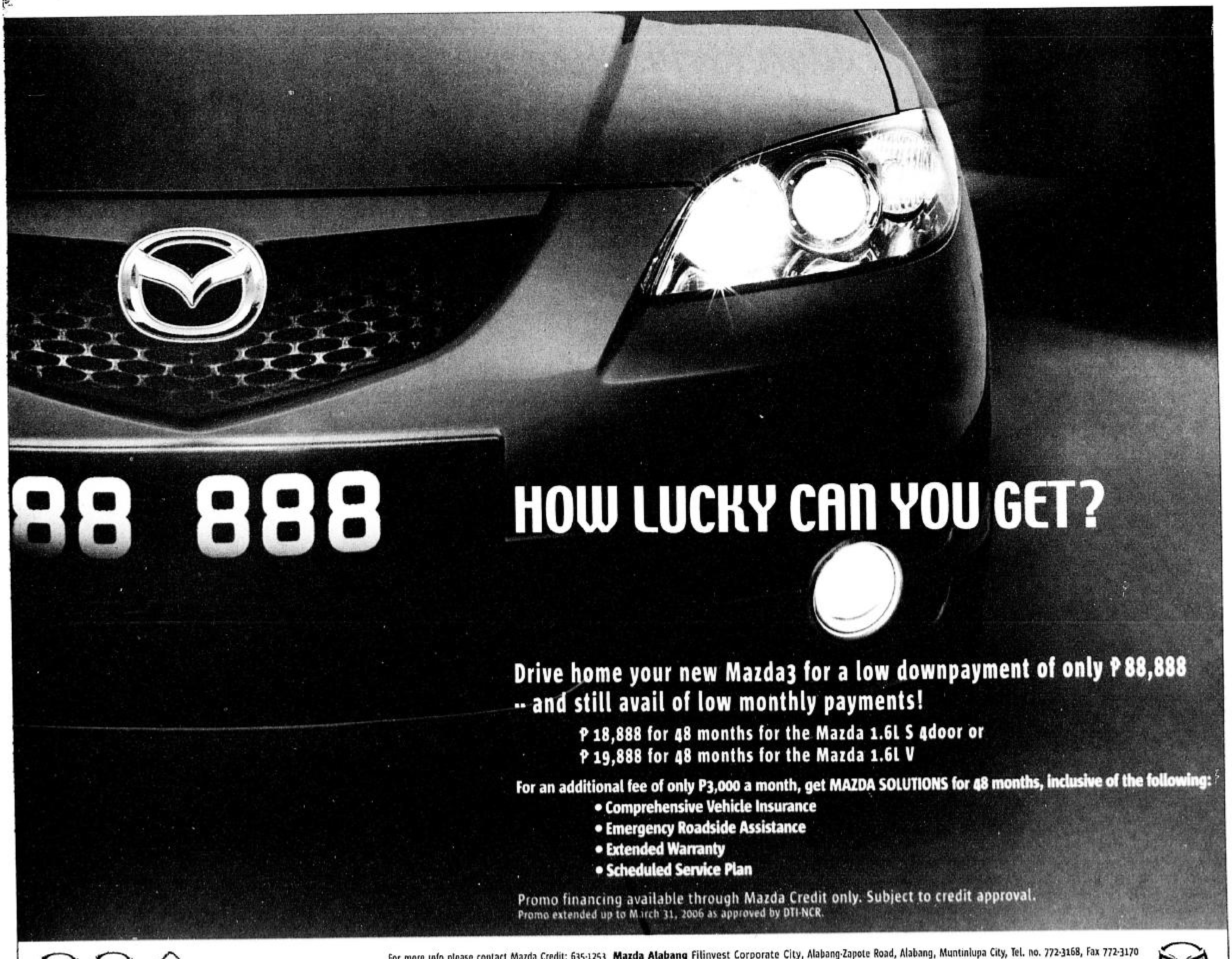
Gabi, his manager Michael Koncz, and retired police officer Robert Peters will take the three-hour drive from Koncz's residence in Orange County.

Trainer Freddie Roach, cutman Joe Chavez and Roach's assistant trainer Eric Brown will leave Wild Card tomorrow and arrive prior to the official weigh-in which is set at 5 p.m. inside the hotel.

Also scheduled to take the trip tomorrow is Jeudy Martinez, Gabi's personal fitness instructor.

Gabi weighed in at 113.5 lbs on the electronic scale provided yesterday by Koncz, who expects his ward to easily meet the 112-lb limit on Friday's weigh-in.

Gabi sparred for the last time Friday. *Salven Lagumbay, contributor*



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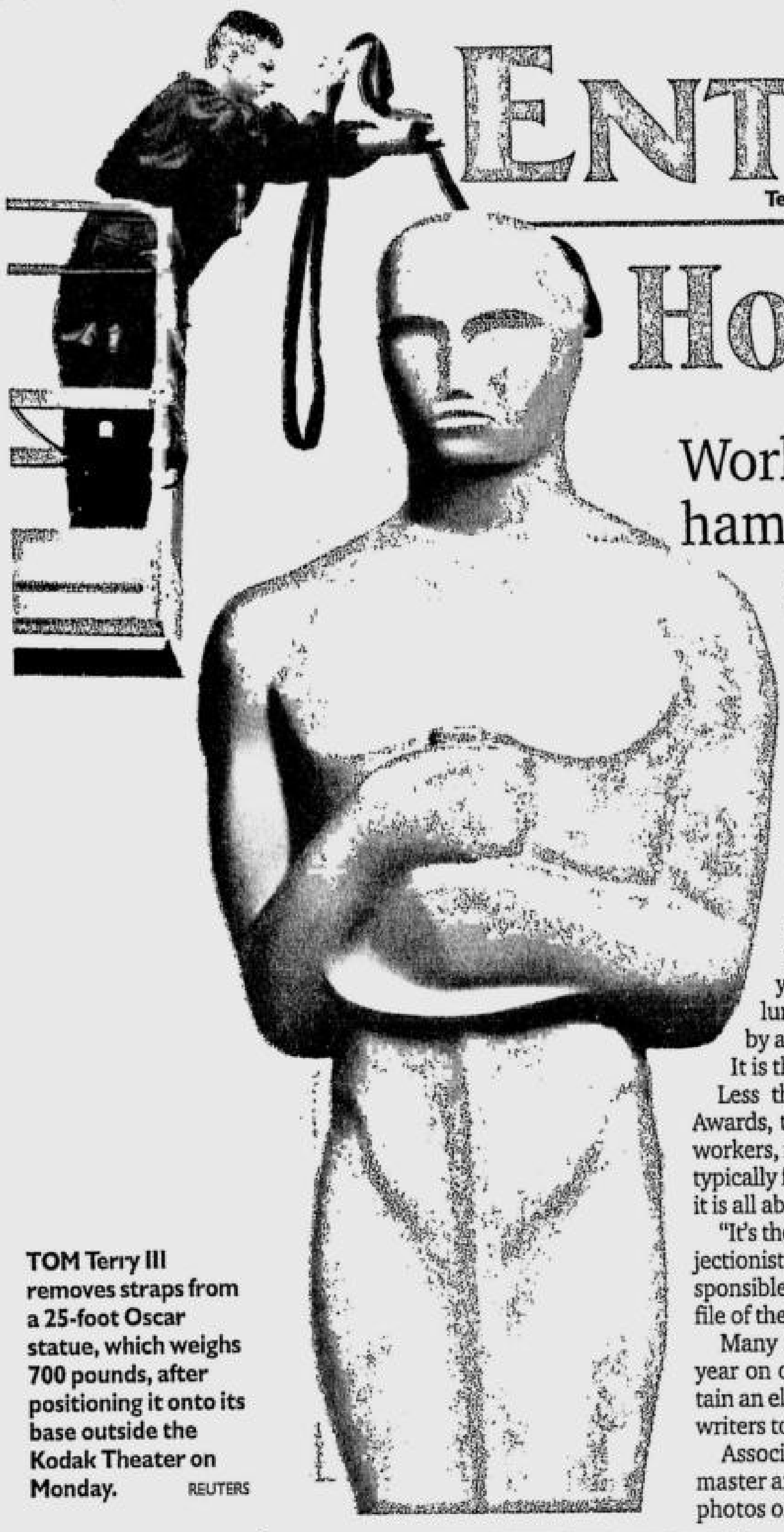
Hollywood's biggest night



TOM Terry III removes straps from a 25-foot Oscar statue, which weighs 700 pounds, after positioning it onto its base outside the Kodak Theater on Monday. REUTERS

Workers have fun hammering Oscar sets together

LOS ANGELES—A 26-FOOT (8-METER)-tall golden Oscar stands backstage at the Kodak Theater amid a sea of black crates.

A dance-rehearsal room is now an office for 50 production workers, complete with desks, phones, computers—and a table topped with coffee, chips and Krispy Kreme doughnuts.

A hallway is becoming a glamorous green room, designed to look like an old-fashioned movie theater lobby. Posters from this year's Best Picture nominees line the wall, illuminated by overhead lights being adjusted by a man perched precariously on a ladder.

It is the Oscars countdown.

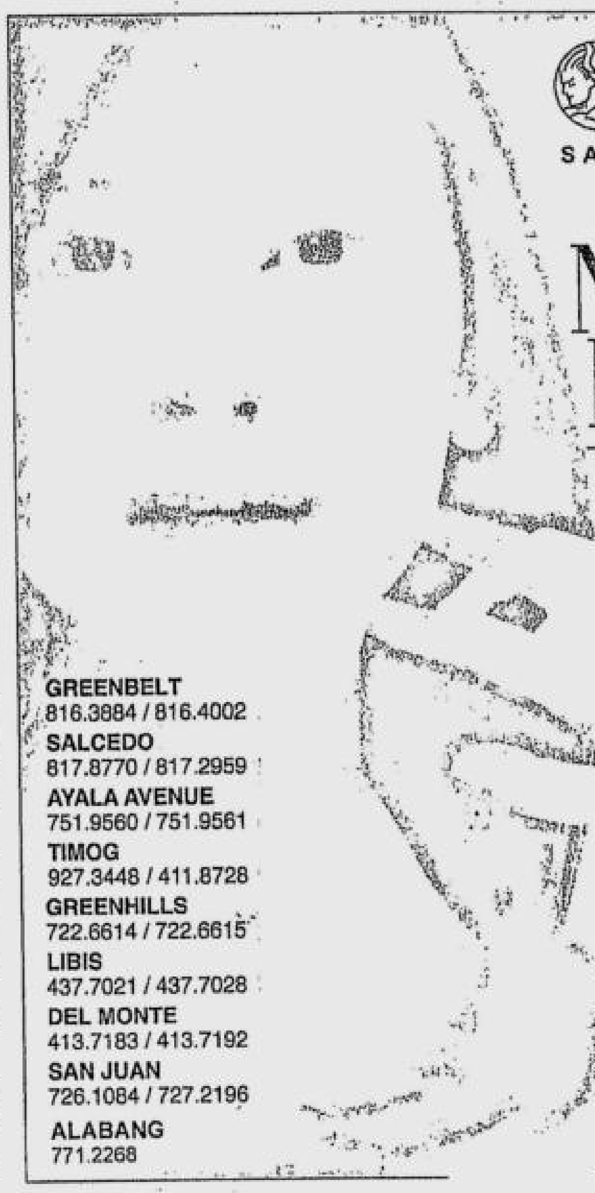
Less than a week before the March 5 Academy Awards, the Kodak Theater is abuzz with some 1,500 workers, most of them toiling with a fan-like fervor not typically found on Hollywood sets. For this happy crew, it is all about crafting the movie world's biggest night.

"It's the most prestigious show, absolutely," said projectionist Dave Taylor, the 17-year Oscar veteran responsible for all moving pictures on stage. "It's the profile of the show, the caliber of the people on the show."

Many on the staff work together throughout the year on other big productions. But the Oscars still retain an element of magic for everyone, from artists and writers to the lighting guys and sound technicians.

Associate producer Michael Seligman, budget master and veteran of 29 Oscar productions, snapped photos of the crews at work.

HOLLYWOOD/ A2-2



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DID YOU KNOW...

ON MARCH 6, 8 p.m., at the Captain's Bar of the Mandarin Oriental, "Red Carpet Manila 2006" will be held. The black-tie affair is described as "a gala of the 78th Academy Awards." Actually, guests will just watch the Oscars program held in Hollywood earlier in the day.

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4: BrokeBack Mountain
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2: Nasaan si Francis?
3: Fearless
4: The Maid

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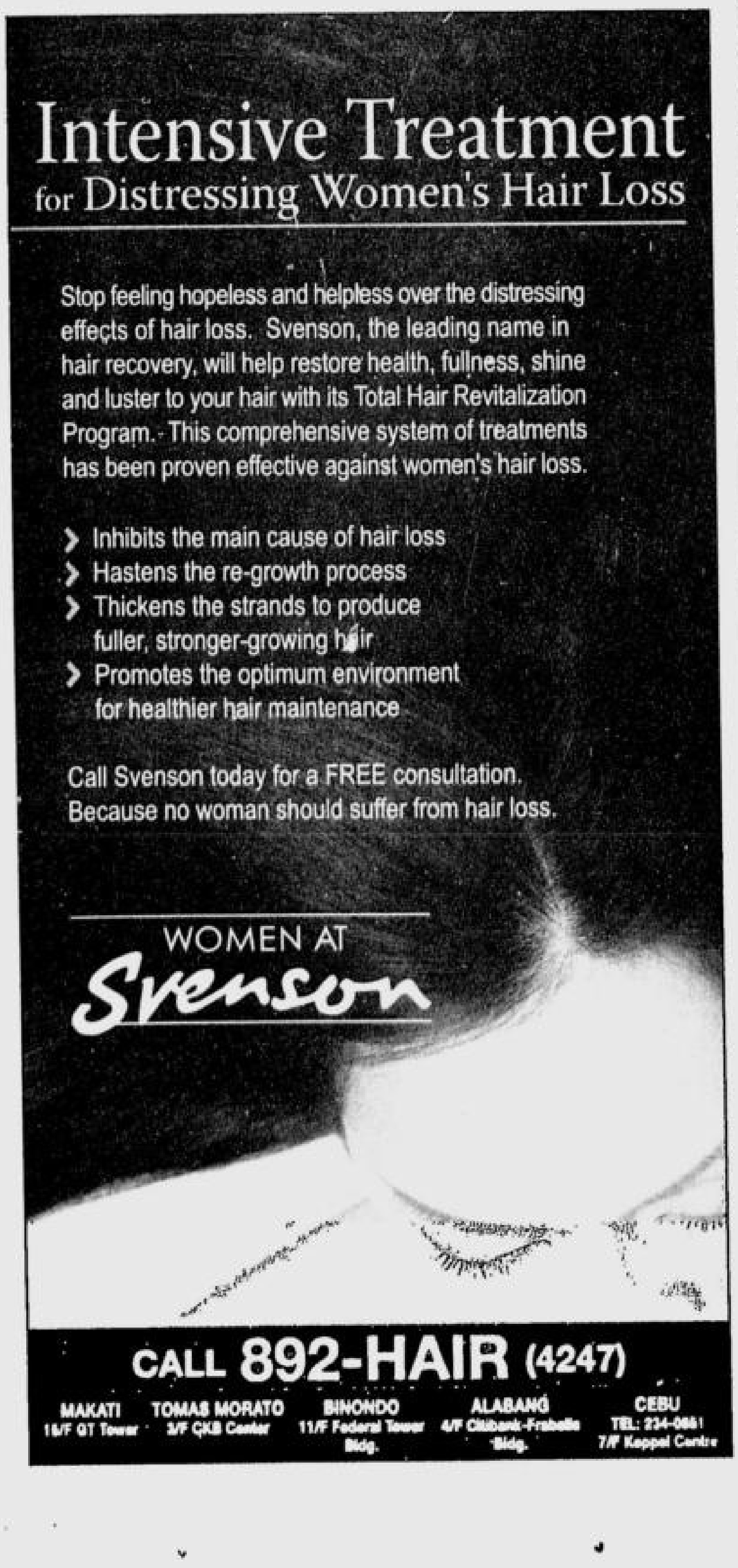

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'Little films' dominate nominees

Most moviegoers haven't seen top contenders

LOS ANGELES—A STELLAR PACK of small-budget and independent movies have left big-studio epics out in the cold in this year's Oscars race, even if most moviegoers have not seen the top films.

Once the sole domain of Hollywood's major studios, next week's Academy Awards will be dominated by the "little films" that far outnumber the usual multimillion-dollar blockbusters.

"It's very unusual to see that four out of five of the Best Picture nominees are independent or low-budget films; it used to be the other way round," said Marty Grove, a columnist for Hollywood Reporter online.

"If they are not truly independently made, they are at least made by the independent divisions of big studios," he told AFP.

Universal Studios' $75-million epic "Munich," directed by Steven Spielberg, is the only exception—all of the other contenders—"Brokeback Mountain," "Crash," "Good Night, and Good Luck" and "Capote"—were relatively cheap to make and were at least partly financed by private investors.

Oscar smiled on independent films, as the big Hollywood studios' box office returns dwindled amid an avalanche of remakes and sequels.

The favorite this year, the gay cowboy love story "Brokeback Mountain," has eight nominations, including Best Picture, Director and Actor, and leads a pack of unusually thoughtful contenders.

Tag prices

Ang Lee's film cost just $14 million to make and was co-financed for Sony Independent Pictures by the co-owner of the Minnesota Twins baseball team.

Director George Clooney's $7.5-million "Good Night, and Good Luck," was co-financed by the Dallas Mavericks basketball team's owner and by Jeff Skoll, one of the founders of eBay.

Paul Haggis's "Crash"—which won six nods, including Best Picture, Best Director and Best Supporting Actor for Matt Dillon—cost $6.5 million and was financed by a real-estate mogul.

The Truman Capote story "Capote" cost $7 million and won six nods, including Best Picture, Best Actor for Philip Seymour Hoffman, Best Supporting Actress for Catherine Keener and Best Director. It was co-financed by independent Canadian production firm Infinity Media.

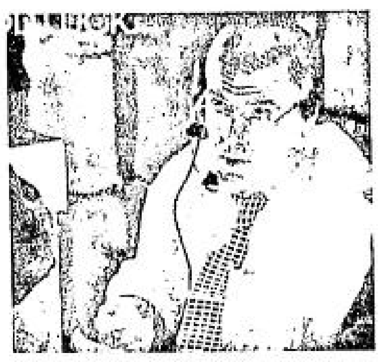
Other small-budget films that pepper the nominees' list: "Hustle and Flow," "Syriana" and "Transamerica." The latter, which stars Best Actress nominee Felicity Huffman, cost just $1 million.

The big-budget offerings include Sony's $85-million "Memoirs of a Geisha," with six nods; "Munich," with five; the $29-million "Walk the Line," with five; and "King Kong," which cost more than $200 million and won four nods. *Marc Lavine, AFP*

"CAPOTE," $7 million

"TRANSAMERICA," $1 million

"CRASH," $6.5 million


"GOOD Night, and Good Luck," $7.5 million

Hollywood's . . .

From page A2-1

"This is a show that fulfills dreams," he says. "Every year is new; every set, different."

Sunday, the seats inside the Kodak will be filled with some of the most famous posteriors. For now, those seats serve as makeshift desks for the art department as it puts the finishing touches on the massive Oscar stage.

Best part

"This is the best part," says assistant art director Joe Celli. Months ago, he built a tiny version of the set out of paper, wood and foam.

The art deco-inspired stage includes two 18-foot, clear acrylic Oscars meant to look like frosted glass, as well as swirling silver conches, majestic pillars, an old-fashioned movie theater box office and a 65-foot wide grand movie marquee with "Oscar" written above it in sweeping white letters.

"There's probably 100 million pixels in the thing," says 13-time Oscar producer Gil Cates, adding that it was designed to evoke the feeling of a classic movie house, "before they became multiplexes."

The board will change throughout the show, announcing categories, nominees and winners.

The entire Oscar team will be working almost around the clock until show time. Little changes on the set and tweaks to the script will continue until then. *Sandy Cohen, AP*

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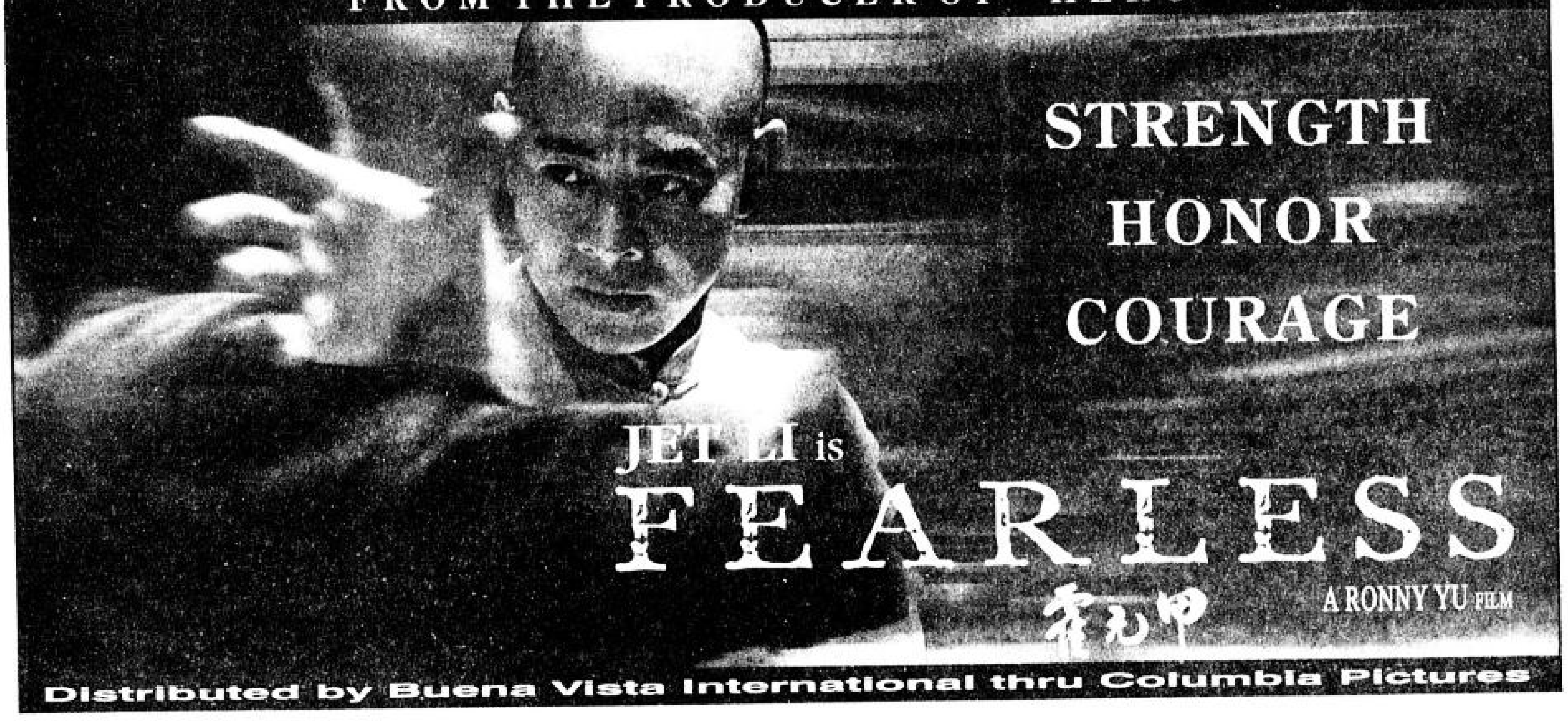
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GB1 GREENBELT 1	MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA	FEARLESS					
GB3 GREENBELT 3	THX PRIDE & PREJUDICE 3.10, 5.45, 8.30, 11.20 GUARANTEED SEATS	THX FEARLESS 1.40, 4.00, 6.20, 8.40, 11.00 GUARANTEED SEATS	CAPOTE 2.10, 4.30, 6.50, 9.10, 11.30 GUARANTEED SEATS	BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN 1.00, 3.30, 6.00, 8.30, 11.00 GUARANTEED SEATS	MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA 2.30, 5.30, 8.30, 11.30 GUARANTEED SEATS		
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Stars' scions start to make their mark

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

IT'S WONDERFUL TO HEAR THAT **Kuh Ledesma**'s lovely singing scion, **Isabella**, is finally coming into her own as a jazz artist.

KUH'S Isabella

Isabella first generated excitement some years ago, but her potential didn't find full fruition until recently. Now that she's been launched by way of a Valentine concert with **Richard Merk**, she's finally on her way.

The Kuh-Isabella tandem is by no means the only interesting mother-daughter pairing on the local musical scene these days.

The **Pinky Marquez-Karel Marquez** tandem is also exciting. Pinky is known to have one of the highest soprano voices in entertainment, and has also won acclaim as a comedienne, musical theater star and member of the Ang Four quartet.

Karel has proven to be similarly versatile. Not only does she sing well; she's also a cool MTV host and a teen fave.

Pilita Corrales and her daughter **Jackielou Blanco** are eminently successful in their own right—Pilita as Asia's Queen of Songs, and Jackielou as a singer, actress, TV personality and fitness buff and exponent.

Stage actress and "digital film queen" **Irma Adlawan** has a lovely and talented daughter, **Ira Marasigan**, member of a girl group that's performed abroad. She has played a starring role in a stage musical. We believe that it's only a matter of time before entertainment producers here discover her as a solo performer.

Zsa Zsa Padilla has achieved preeminent success as singer, actress and TV host. Her daughter, **Karylle**, is promising in her own right, and is already popular as a singer and actress. We hope that Zsa Zsa and Karylle will perform together in a major production this year.

Acclaimed singer **Mon David** has a gifted and beautiful daughter, **Nicole David**, now a musical theater star. Nicole sings with her father in some of his shows, and after she finishes college, we trust she'll give her performing career her full attention.

Another dad who has a musically talented daughter (**Hannah**) is **Yoyoy Villame**. And, in the field of dance, **Gary V** is happy that his own scions, **Paolo** and **Gabriel**, are literally hotfooting their way up the show biz ladder.

Finally, **Laurice Guillen** and **Johnny Delgado** are mighty proud of their talented daughters, **Ana** and **Ina**. Ana is an outstanding opera and musical theater performer, while Ina recently starred in an attention-calling production of Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet."

'Virtuosos'

"Virtuosos," the Cultural Center of the Philippines' major fundraising event for 2006, features outstanding Filipino pianists performing with the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra, cellist **Renato Lucas** and Ballet Philippines.

The pianists featured are **Della Gamboa Besa**, **Ryan Cayabyab**, **Mary Anne Espina**, **Rudolf Golez**, **Anamariz G. de Guzman**, **Najib Ismail**, **Manuel Maramba**, OSB, **Ma. Regina Monteclaros**, **Peter Porticos**, **Raul Sunico**, **Nena del Rosario Villanueva** and **Greg Zuniega**.

Program consists of Buencamino's "Mayon Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra," Bizet's "Carmen Fantasy," Rachmaninoff's "Vocalise," Donizetti-Leschetizky's Andante finale from "Lucia di Lammermoor," Piazzolla's "Le Grand Tango," Liszt's "Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2 in C sharp minor," Wagner's Liebestod from "Tristan and Isolde," Mozart's Allegro from "Concerto in E flat Major for Two Pianos and Orchestra, K. 365," "Salidumay" attanged by Cayabyab and "Kay Ganda ng OPM," and "Rhapsody in Blue" by Gershwin. **Monino Duque** directs.

Major sponsor is BNP Paribas, the top bank in France and a major supporter of the arts. Call 832-3681 or 891-9999.

'North Country'

The lovely **Charlize Theron** as a miner? That we've got see. Theron's new film is "North Country," and her portrayal of an iron miner in it must more than pass muster—it's been nominated for a Best Actress Oscar.

Theron plays Josey Aimes, who returns to her hometown after a failed marriage. A single mother of two kids, she turns to the predominant source of employment in the region—the iron mines. She is prepared for the backbreaking and often dangerous work, but coping with the harassment she and other female miners encounter proves far more challenging.

Woody Harrelson, **Sissy Spacek** and **Frances McDormand** play other key roles.

KAREL Marquez with mom Pinky

'Fearless'

Jet Li's latest film, "Fearless," is his final martial arts movie. The film is about Huo Yuanjia, founder of the wushu martial arts form.

Li likes his new starrer because "It expresses my philosophy in life." What will he do next? He enigmatically points out: "Martial arts movies and action films are too separate things. I feel that it's time to close this chapter in my life."

"Fearless" is directed by Ronny Yu, and fight-choreographed by Yen Wo Ping ("Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon"; "The Matrix" series).

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3	PRIDE & PREJUDICE	12:10, 2:55, 5:40, 8:25, 11:00	GP
4	BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE 2	1:40, 4:00, 6:20, 8:40, 11:00	GP

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FEARLESS PG13 1:35,3:50,6:05,8:20,10:30	FINAL DESTINATION 3 R13 1:05,3:15,5:25, 7:35,9:45	PRIDE AND PREJUDICE G 12:15,2:45,5:15, 7:45,10:15

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MTRCB GP
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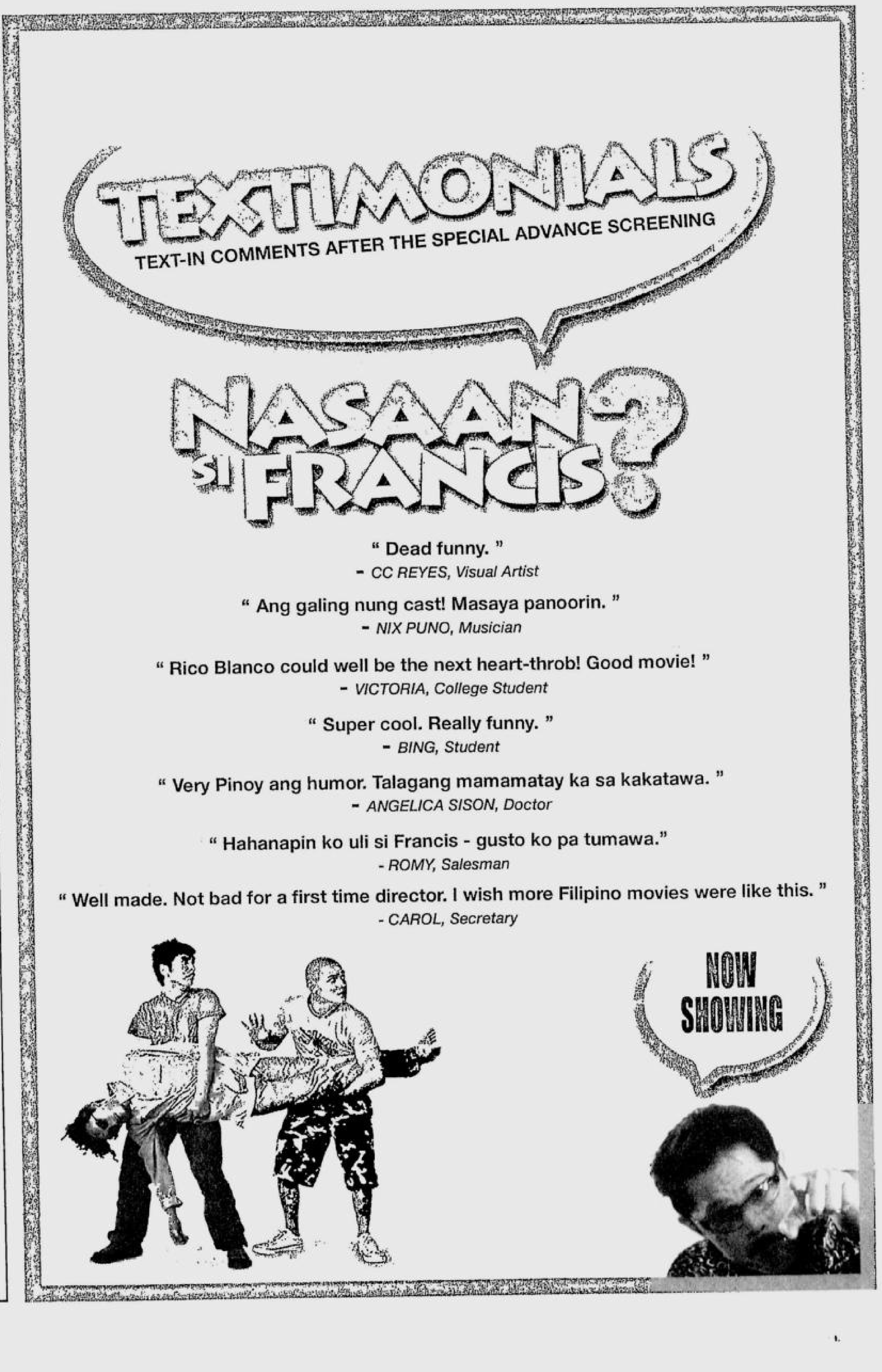

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- VICTORIA, College Student

" Super cool. Really funny. "
- BING, Student

" Very Pinoy ang humor. Talagang mamamatay ka sa kakatawa. "
- ANGELICA SISON, Doctor

" Hahanapin ko uli si Francis - gusto ko pa tumawa."
- ROMY, Salesman

" Well made. Not bad for a first time director. I wish more Filipino movies were like this. "
- CAROL, Secretary

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ROUNDUP

OMB moves

THE OPTICAL Media Board and Philippine National Police have filed cases before the Department of Justice against the owners of magazine and computer shops which they raided in January for selling pirated optical discs. The store owners are: Felimon Barbasa III of Filbar's in Glorietta II and Greenbelt I, Makati; Yancy Lim of Genex Mediatech and Jose Marie Custodio of Pro-Con Computer, both in Ali Mall, Cubao.

The OMB filed criminal cases violation of the Optical Media Act against them, while the PNP filed a case against Barbasa for selling pornographic anime CDs, a violation of Article 201 of the Revised Penal Code.

Top movies

LOS ANGELES—Tyler Perry fans reunited at theaters for another tale of mad black women.

"Tyler Perry's Madea's Family Reunion," a comic drama in which writer-director Perry also stars in three roles, debuted as the weekend's No. 1 movie with $30.25 million, according to studio estimates.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at US and Canadian theaters, according to official tracker Exhibitor Relations:

1) "Tyler Perry's Madea's Family Reunion," $30.25M; 2) "Eight Below," $15.7M; 3) "The Pink Panther," $11.3M; 4) "Date Movie," $9.2M; 5) "Curious George," $7M; 6) "Firewall," $6.3M; 7) "Final Destination 3," $5.35M; 8) "Doogal," $3.6M; 9) "Running Scared," $3.1M; 10) "Freedomland," $2.9M. AP

No smoking

WELLINGTON, New Zealand— Hollywood and India's Bollywood—the world's most prolific film production centers—should quit showing smoking on movies aimed at children, a New Zealand anti-smoking lobby group said Tuesday.

"Smoking in kid-rated movies does not sell movies, but it does sell cigarettes," Action on Smoking and Health director Becky Freeman said in a statement.

With two out of three youth-rated Hollywood movies containing smoking and/or tobacco product placement, the statement said, it was time to rate all such movies as "R18" (Restricted to those over 18) in the New Zealand market. "The only exceptions should be when the presentation of tobacco clearly and unambiguously reflects the dangers and consequences of tobacco use—or is necessary to represent the smoking of a real historical figure."

The group's campaign, part of a second annual International Day of Action for Smoke Free Movies, is being launched ahead of Hollywood's 78th Academy Awards on March 5. *AP*

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EVENT CALENDAR SM CENTER Stage EVENT CALENDAR

1 THE APO EXPERIENCE MARCH 11, 2006 SATURDAY• 8:30 PM SM MEGAMALL CINEMA 3
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THE PODIUM 633-8976
1 FEARLESS 01:40 FS / 02:05 MF / 04:20 / 06:35 08:25 LFS / 09:00 LMF / 10:50 END
2 PRIDE AND PREJUDICE 12:40 FS / 01:00 MF / 03:15 LFS / 03:35 LMF / 05:40 END
MEGAMALL
1 MEMOIRS OF GEISHA 12:30 FS / 12:05 MF / 03:35 / 06:410 09:10 LFS / 09:40 LMF / 12:05 END

CEBU (032) 231-3876
1 MEMOIRS OF GEISHA 11:20FS / 11:30 MF / 02:00 / 04:30 / 07:00 09:22 LFS / 09:30 LMF / 11:50 END
2 FEARLESS 11:20FS / 11:30 MF / 01:30 / 03:30 / 05:30 07:30 / 09:05 LFS / 09:30 LMF / 11:05 END
3 AEON FLUX 11:20FS / 11:30 MF / 01:30 / 03:30 / 05:30 7:30 / 09:05 LFS / 09:30 LMF / 11:05 END
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4 RESERVED
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9 CLOSE TO YOU
10 FINAL DESTINATION 3
11 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
12 FIREWALL

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2 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
3 FINAL DESTINATION 3
4 PRIDE AND PREJUDICE
5 CLOSE TO YOU
6 PINK PANTHER
7 AEON FLUX
8 NASAAN SI FRANCIS
9 MEMOIRS OF GEISHA
10 FIREWALL

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9 PRIDE AND PREJUDICE
10 FIREWALL
11 MEMOIRS OF GEISHA
12 SAW 2

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7 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
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10 RESERVED

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8 FINAL DESTINATION 3

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4 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
5 PINK PANTHER
6 FINAL DESTINATION 3
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8 I WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU
9 CLOSE TO YOU
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12 FIREWALL

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2 SYRIANA
3 FINAL DESTINATION 3
4 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
5 FEARLESS
6 CLOSE TO YOU
7 I WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU
8 AEON FLUX

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1 MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA
2 NEW WORLD
3 CLOSE TO YOU
4 FEARLESS

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1 MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA
2 PINK PANTHER
3 CLOSE TO YOU
4 AEON FLUX

SM CITY DASMARINAS
1 FUNDERWORLD 2
2 CLOSE TO YOU
3 WALK THE LINE
4 GOAL

SM CITY LUCENA
1 UNDERWORLD 2
2 CLOSE TO YOU
3 MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA
4 FIREWALL

SM CITY BATANGAS
1 MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA
2 CLOSE TO YOU
3 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN
4 ST. ANGE

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

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2 FEARLESS
3 AEON FLUX
4 WALK THE LINE
5 PRIME
6 FIREWALL
7 CLOSE TO YOU
8 PINK PANTHER

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2 RESERVED
3 GOAL
4 WALK THE LINE
5 CLOSE TO YOU
6 FIREWALL
7 RESERVED
8 MEMOIRS OF GEISHA

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4 BLOODRAYNE
5 WALK THE LINE
6 MEMOIRS OF GEISHA

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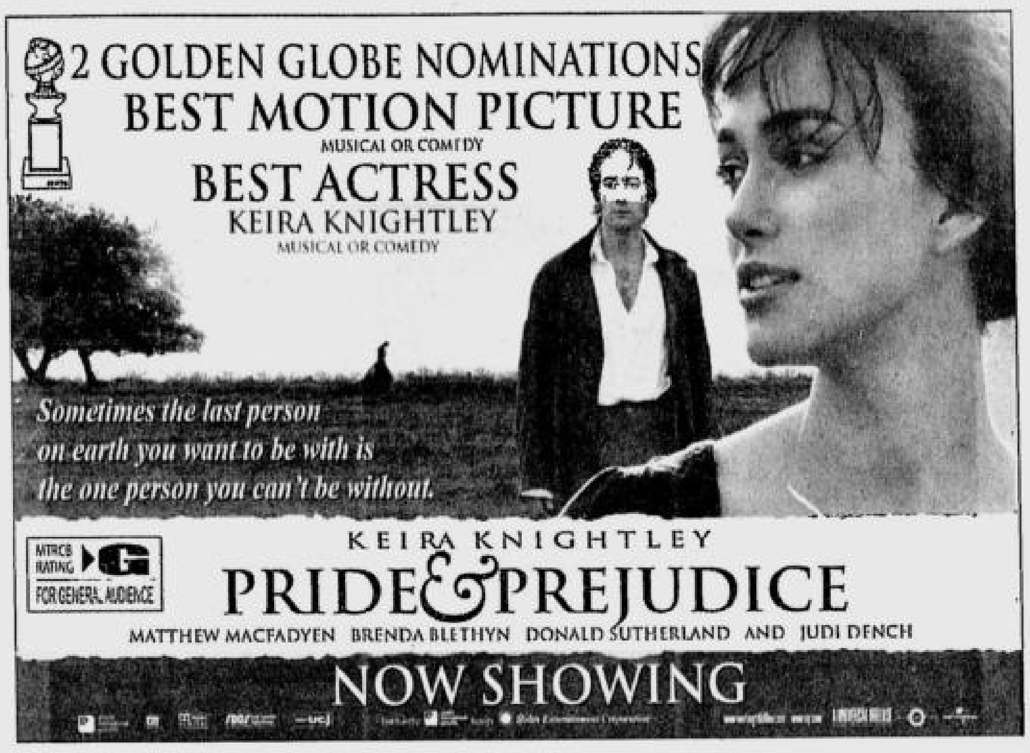

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The show goes on for Jessa

By Marinel R. Cruz

THE SHOW GOES ON TOMORROW FOR singer Jessa Zaragoza and husband Dingdong Avanzado, whose Valentine concert was canceled when she suffered esophagitis or severe inflammation of the esophagus.

Jessa was taken to the Cardinal Santos Hospital on Feb. 7 after she complained of difficulty in swallowing. An endoscopy procedure revealed internal bleeding. The singer was prohibited from doing physical activity.

Rested

"That Thing Called Love" was originally set Feb. 14 at the Music Museum. Tomorrow's show will be held at the same concert hall. Previously sold tickets will be honored.

"I've rested," Jessa said. "I left the hospital as soon as my doctor said it was all right."

She said she felt chest and stomach pains on her birthday, exactly one week before her hospitalization. Even drinking water became difficult, she recalled. "It felt like heart burns. I ignored it at first, and just hoped I'd be better by Valentine's Day. I thought it was just tonsillitis and not serious at all."

She added: "My doctor gave me medicine, and still I got worse. When he recommended a biopsy procedure, I said, 'My God! Am I going to die?' Actually, he later said I should be careful because some cases lead to cancer."

Dingdong said the "real blessing" his family received at the time was the outpouring of support from friends. "We don't see these people often, but when this happened to Jessa, our friends all expressed concern," he said.

Nervous

Dingdong confessed that he got worried, too, about the biopsy. "I was assured that it was standard procedure. But ordinary people like us relate biopsy to cancer," he told INQUIRER Entertainment. "I [just] prayed fervently for things to happen according to God's will."

Later this month, Dingdong and their daughter Jayda will fly with Jessa to the United States. Jessa, Ara Mina and Marissa Sanchez, will perform in a show titled "Soul Sisters" in San Francisco, San Diego and Los Angeles in California; Hawaii and New Jersey.

DINGDONG, Jessa and Jayda during a recent trip to the US.

ILLUSTRATION BY ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

Three-eyed alien's view of RP television

By Art Villasanta
Contributor

CHEER FACTOR

IF I WERE A THREE-EYED ALIEN CHANNEL surfing Philippine TV from a starship, I'd say this country is populated mostly by teenagers who spend their waking hours either falling madly in love or vivisecting other people with gusto.

That's the impression I get from watching Pinoy programs—"fantaseryes" and fairy tales about "true" love.

The stars of these programs are usually teenagers.

Teen power on Pinoy TV is easy to understand. The teen market is huge. Teen viewership translates to money. And savvy stations are hard-nosed market exploiters. What better way is there to make gazillions on the cheap?

With both eyes on the almighty bottom line, these savvy stations churn out pointless programs featuring good-looking teens (the fairer, the better) pretending to sing, dance and act.

Bling & CGIs

It's what the teen market wants, the stations tell themselves. Let's give it the tested rich-boy-meets-poor-girl formula ... and then vice versa.

Let's bling the show with CGIs (computer-generated images) for special effects. Let's give the teen heroes magical powers. Don't forget the badass swords and the cool armor.

Better yet, let's make them rulers of Neverland. Michael Jackson wouldn't mind; he's broke.

And these suddenly famous teens love it. They're on nationwide TV. They've got screaming fans. They make tons more money than they did when they crewed for Jollibee.

And all they've got to do is act naturally.

But typecasting these teenagers as either dumbos or bimbos in tacky tearjerker roles is an insult to them. They could actually become role models and great entertainers, if given good and intelligent roles.

Yet producers claim silly roles are what the market wants, and so that's what they should get.

Sad shame

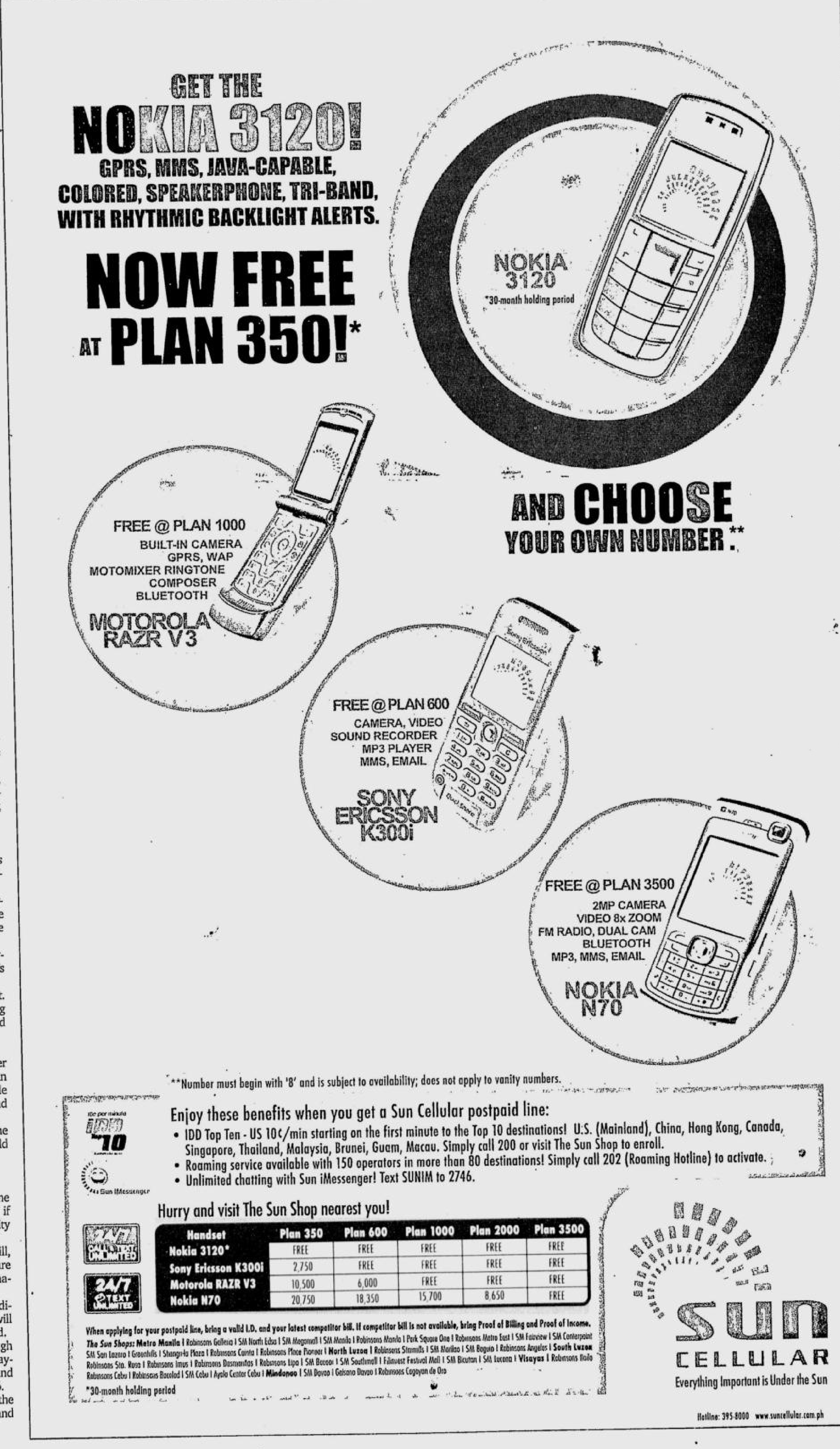
Today's teen stars are the future of Philippine television. Acting naturally shouldn't cut it if Pinoy TV has ambitions of challenging quality programs from Japan, Taiwan and Korea.

Acting smart should be the norm. This will, however, need stories written by more mature scriptwriters and creative vision from more mature directors.

Producers know that these two vital ingredients in making Pinoy TV truly world class will cost them more money than they care to spend.

But someone's got to start along this rough road because Pinoy TV's only alternative is staying trapped in a time warp where silly plots and wooden acting harken back to movies of 1906.

It's 2006 and it would be a sad shame if the only laudable improvement between then and now were the CGIs.



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6 BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN
7 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
8 CLOSE TO YOU
9 NASAAN SI FRANCIS
10 PINK PANTHER

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12
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2 CLOSE TO YOU
3 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
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5 PRIDE AND PREJUDICE
6 MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA
7 NASAAN SI FRANCIS?

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8 BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN

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2 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE 2
3 BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN
4 MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA

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4 CLOSE TO YOU
5 MURDER

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3 NEW WORLD
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6 BLOODRAYNE

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3 FIREWALL
4 MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA
5 CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2
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1 WALK THE LINE
2 MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA
3 AEON FLUX
4 BLOODRAYNE
5 CLOSE TO YOU
6 FIREWALL

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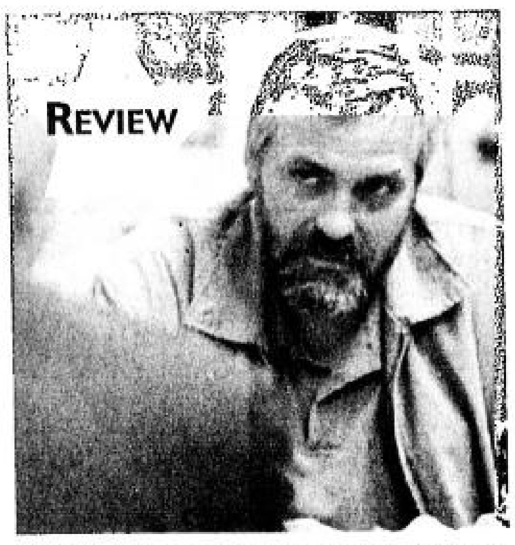
Inaccessible territory

'Syriana' is a little too perplexing

By Oliver M. Pulumbarit
Contributor



REVIEW

GEORGE Clooney as an aging CIA field agent.

THERE'S NO DOUBT THAT THE COMPLEX "Syriana" is well-written. It tackles the current-day oil situation while exposing the grey territories that radically different governments tread while protecting their respective interests.

Written and directed by Stephen Gaghan, who won an Oscar for the screenplay of "Traffic," the film follows disparate perspectives of characters that seem to have no connection to each other whatsoever, but are actually key players in a sprawling whole. It is very ambitious in that respect, and becomes inaccessible in many parts.

> As a result, viewers feel little for the characters

Shot in a shaky, news magazine-esque manner, the genre-defying endeavor gets quite dizzying. Its use of business jargon throughout the story doesn't really help explain what's happening. It's hard to pin down some character's intentions because of the jagged script that loses the viewer in the whys and wherefores early on.

There are solid turns, as its cast conveys truthful enough emotions that give soul to the protagonists. They seem to be more comprehensible, however, when they're not saying anything.

Think-tank term

It says a lot when the movie's production notes offer more insights and clearer explanations than the film itself. "Syriana," it says, is a Washington think-tank term for "a hypothetical reshaping of the Middle East." That idea can easily be gleaned from the movie, yes, thanks to straightforward lines that telegenic Bryan Woodman (Matt Damon) says when he's not facing cameras as an oil industry analyst. The intricate web captures the diversity of people trying to make their efforts count in the bigger picture, including an aging CIA field agent (a paunchy George Clooney), a noble corporate lawyer (Jeffrey Wright), a forward-thinking prince (Alexander Siddig), and a young Pakistani laborer (Mazhar Munir).

Muddle of events

"Syriana" is a globe-trotting look into how certain people from different cultures view—and react to—changes brought about by global tension and economic shifts. In the course of the story, these individuals learn about disillusionment and come face-to-face with new choices that will, alas, change them forever. Despite that, they're not really characters that we can invest any attachment to. They don't have to be, yes. Thing is, we barely care for them.

While they can be people whose realities may ring true, things get lost in the highfalutin' muddle of events. We don't care if they get double-crossed, or if their moral compasses get compromised, or if they head for certain doom. But for all its gloom-and-doom, "Syriana" is unique, if too perplexingly highbrow.

2ND WEEK
MTRCB RATING ▶ R-13 | STRICTLY FOR 13 YEARS OF AGE AND UP.
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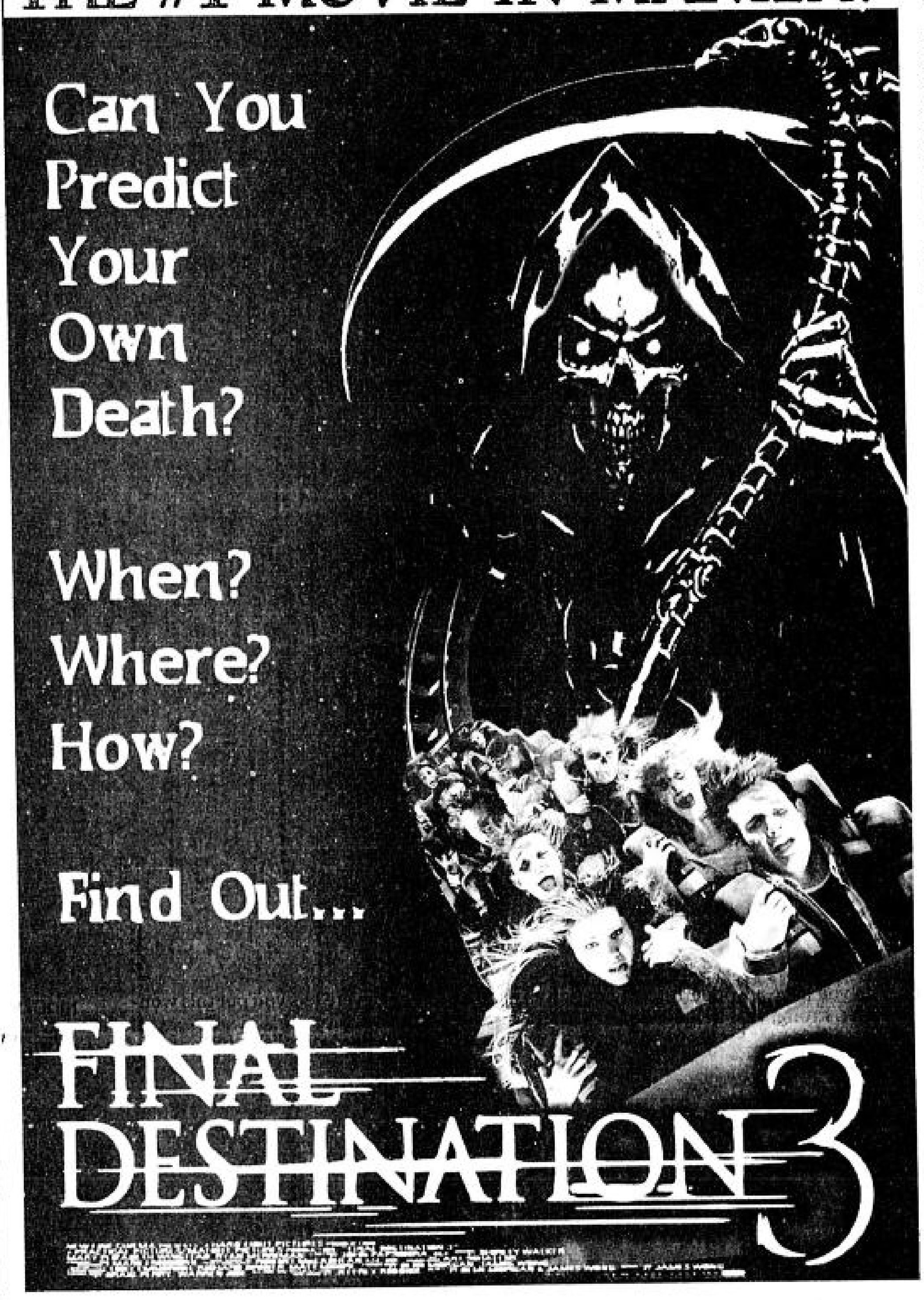


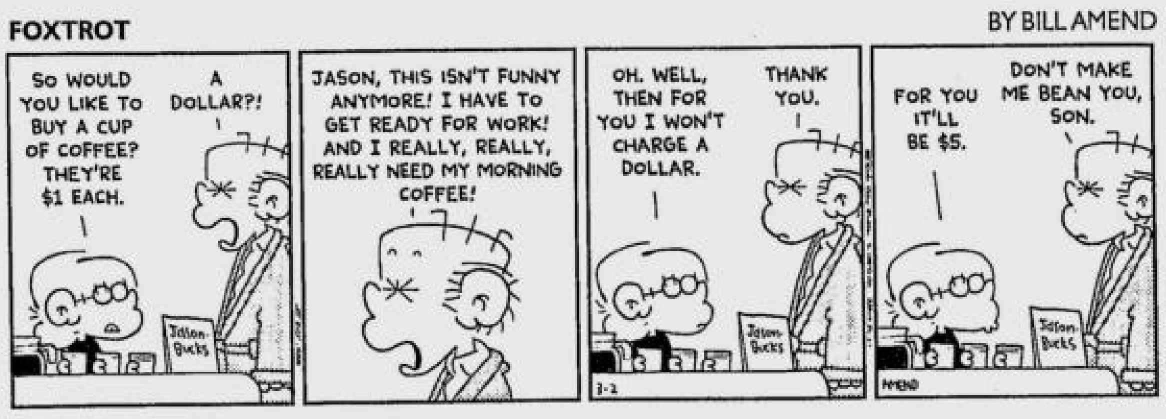
Can You Predict Your Own Death?
When? Where? How?
Find Out...
FINAL DESTINATION 3

OPENS MARCH 8

TO RESSURECT THE DEAD, THE LIVING MUST BE SACRIFICED.
SEAN BEAN
MARIA BELLO
THE DARK
BASED ON TRUE EVENTS

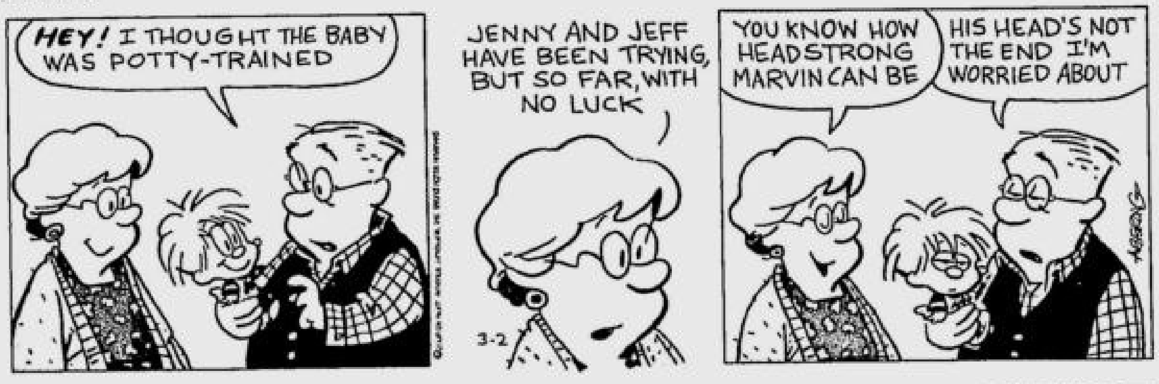
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


SO WOULD YOU LIKE TO BUY A CUP OF COFFEE? THEY'RE $1 EACH.
A DOLLAR?!
Jason-Bucks
JASON, THIS ISN'T FUNNY ANYMORE! I HAVE TO GET READY FOR WORK! AND I REALLY, REALLY, REALLY NEED MY MORNING COFFEE!
OH. WELL, THEN FOR YOU I WON'T CHARGE A DOLLAR.
THANK YOU.
3-2
FOR YOU IT'LL BE $5.
DON'T MAKE ME BEAN YOU, SON.
AMEND

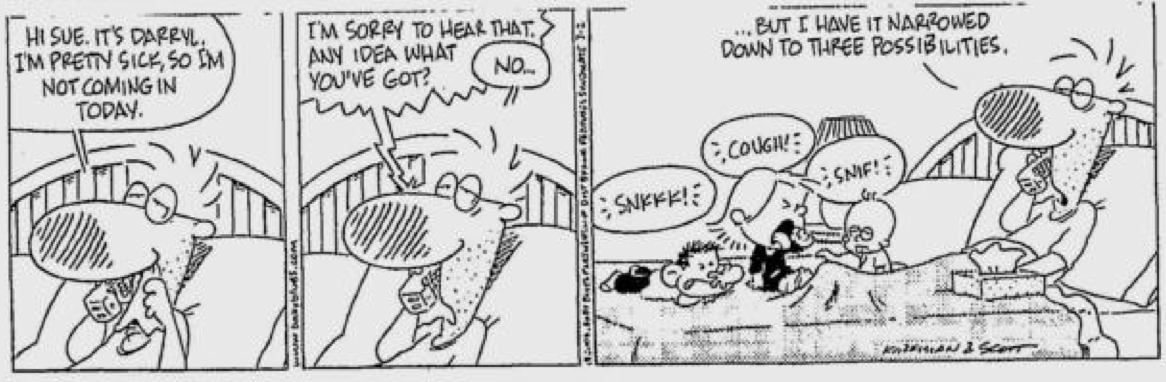
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


HEY! I THOUGHT THE BABY WAS POTTY-TRAINED
JENNY AND JEFF HAVE BEEN TRYING, BUT SO FAR, WITH NO LUCK
3-2
YOU KNOW HOW HEADSTRONG MARVIN CAN BE
HIS HEAD'S NOT THE END I'M WORRIED ABOUT
ARMSTRONG

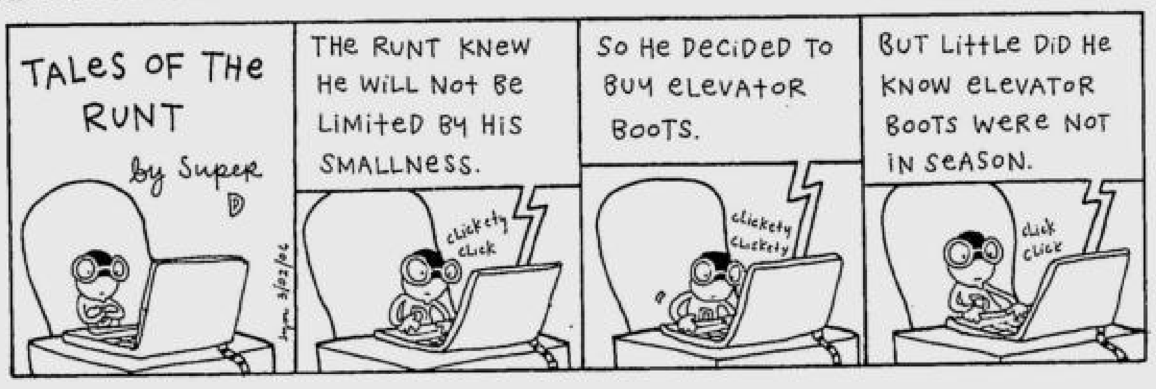
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


HI SUE. IT'S DARRYL. I'M PRETTY SICK, SO I'M NOT COMING IN TODAY.
I'M SORRY TO HEAR THAT. ANY IDEA WHAT YOU'VE GOT?
NO...
...BUT I HAVE IT NARROWED DOWN TO THREE POSSIBILITIES.
SNKKK!
COUGH!
SNIF!
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


TALES OF THE RUNT
by Super D
clickety click
THE RUNT KNEW HE WILL NOT BE LIMITED BY HIS SMALLNESS.
SO HE DECIDED TO BUY ELEVATOR BOOTS.
clickety clickety
BUT LITTLE DID HE KNOW ELEVATOR BOOTS WERE NOT IN SEASON.
click click

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: Not only do you have a wonderful imagination, your ability to persevere lets you put this wonderful talent to good use. You have strong, very definite ideas. You also have an unswerving loyalty to whatever you embrace. The year ahead is an excellent year for work, building and construction. You will accomplish a lot!
Birthdate of: Theodore Seuss Geisel (Dr. Seuss) children's author and artist; Laraine Newman, actress; Tom Wolfe, author.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Delays related to the government and large institutions are unavoidable now. Just cope as best you can. This is a good month for research.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Old friends from your past are back in your life again. It's important to have history with someone. Knowing where you come from helps to define the present.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Encounters with previous bosses and old authority figures in your life might catch you off-guard. However, offers to return to an old job might be worth considering.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Delays and cancellations with travel and publishing are unavoidable. You might have to change your plans. Expect to hear from people who are far away.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): This is a good time to finish up old business connected with shared property and the resources of others. This also includes anything having to do with debt, taxes and insurance matters.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Ex-spouses and old partners are back in your life again. Look your best! (Living well is the best revenge, and it's OK to remind them what they lost.)

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Delays and mixed-up communications at work occur now. Staff shortages and misunderstandings are unavoidable. This means you have to be patient with co-workers and customers.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You might be surprised to run into an old flame—if not in person, then at least in your dreams. This is a good time to finally wrap up matters related to children.

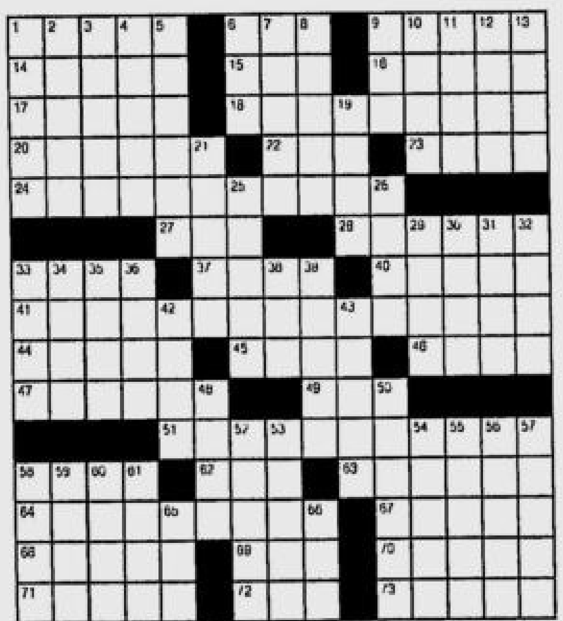
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Relatives you haven't seen for a while are camping on your doorstep. It seems like everyone from your past is suddenly calling you. Just cope as best you can.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Expect delays and breakdowns in cars, trucks and ground transportation. Even public transportation creates hiccups for you. Checks in the mail are late now, as well. (Oh dear.)

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Although current financial matters are stalled in the water, you can now wrap up old money deals. You might finally buy something you've wanted for a long time.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You feel vaguely restless now. You're not sure why. This is because a lot of stuff from the past is bubbling to the surface of your mind. Relax. No worries.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Alan P. Olschwang
Huntington Beach, CA

3/2/06

ACROSS
1 Causes pain
6 Circle segment
9 Refuge
14 Consumed
15 Expression of confusion
16 Tolerate
17 Toyota model
18 Start of Evan Esar quote
20 Mistakes
22 Bikini part
23 Touch down
24 Part 2 of quote
27 Wide shoe width
28 Single-celled animals
33 Lhasa __
37 La commedia dell' __
40 Sort of setter
41 Part 3 of quote
44 Susan Lucci role
45 Achy
46 Require
47 Hate
49 Trireme tool
51 Part 4 of quote
58 Dramatic divisions
62 Call off
63 Stockings merchant
64 End of quote
67 Poison Ivy's cousin
68 Chilling
69 Treatment for swelling
70 Indian drums
71 Severe
72 NATO word
73 Narrow openings

DOWN
1 NHL goalie Dominik
2 Driver's about-face
3 Camera-ready copy
4 "Presumed Innocent" author Scott
5 Meager
6 Eureka!
7 Cuban dance
8 Map
9 Solo in "Star Wars"
10 First victim
11 "__ Zapata!"
12 Idyllic place
13 Social outcast
19 Okinawa port
21 Sort of shop
25 Bison congregations
26 Give off
29 Gray or Moran
30 Liver secretion
31 Tennis great
32 Molt
33 Achieved a top mark
34 Make cuts
35 Agitated state
36 Nursery rhyme opener
38 Also
39 Continental cash
42 Kiln
43 Below to a bard
48 Christmas decoration
50 Perches
52 Neighbor of Nepal
53 Decree
54 Customary
55 Saintly haloes
56 Distributed the hands
57 Killer whales
58 Bedazzles
59 Guitarist Atkins
60 Old Testament weed
61 Follow a recipe direction
65 Female fowl
66 "Runaway" singer Shannon

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

C	L	A	M	■	B	A	E	R	■	A	D	E	L	E
R	A	M	A	■	A	B	B	A	■	R	O	A	S	T
O	M	E	N	■	B	E	R	T	■	R	U	S	T	S
W	I	N	T	H	E	L	O	T	T	E	R	Y	■	■
N	A	D	I	A	■	■	■	L	A	S	■	R	S	T
■	■	■	S	T	R	I	K	E	I	T	R	I	C	H
A	C	T	■	S	O	R	A	■	■	S	A	D	I	E
G	O	A	D	■	C	A	B	A	L	■	D	E	F	T
A	L	L	O	T	■	■	U	T	E	S	■	R	I	A
M	A	K	E	A	K	I	L	L	I	N	G	■	■	■
A	S	S	■	S	I	N	■	■	■	C	O	S	T	A
■	■	H	I	T	T	H	E	J	A	C	K	P	O	T
A	B	O	D	E	■	A	V	O	W	■	A	R	N	O
B	O	W	E	R	■	L	I	K	E	■	R	E	A	L
E	A	S	E	S	■	F	L	E	D	■	T	E	L	L

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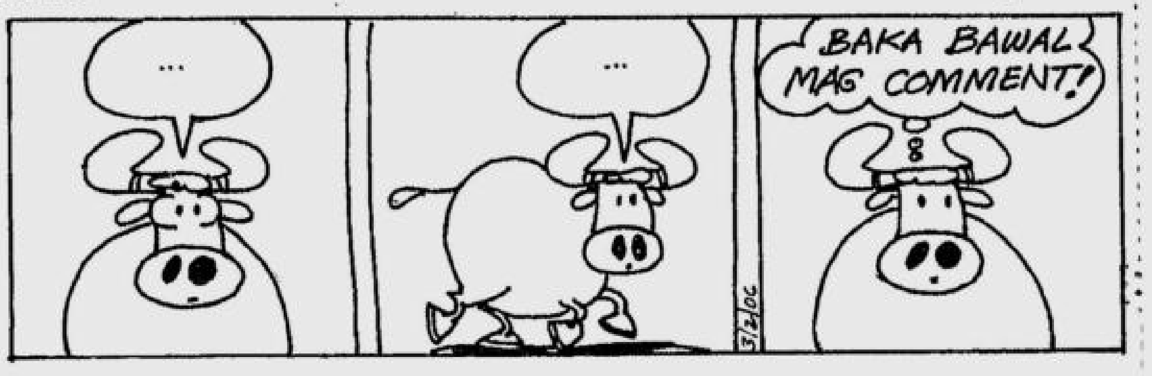
3/2/06

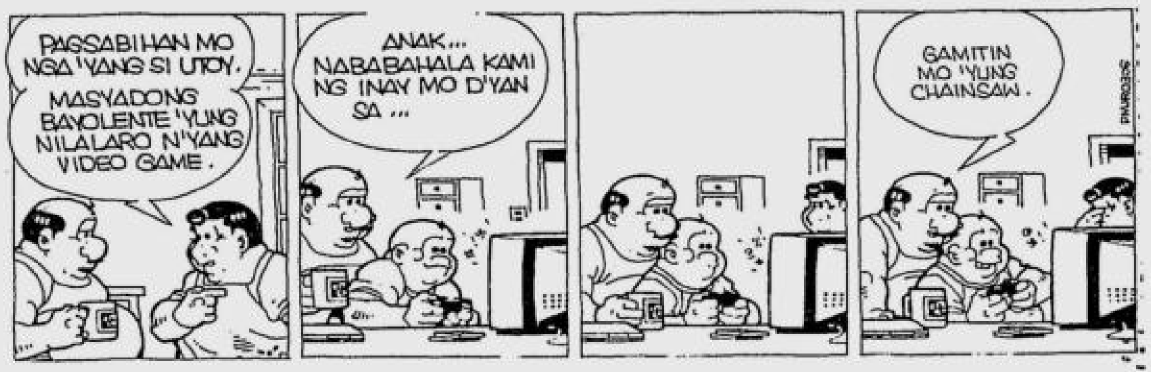
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


...
...
3/2/06
BAKA BAWAL MAG COMMENT!

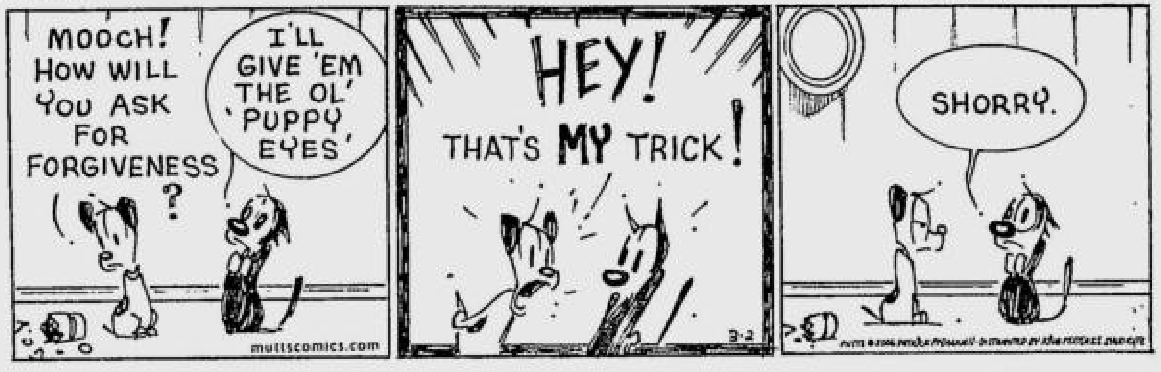
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


PAGSABIHAN MO NGA 'YANG SI UTOY.
MASYADONG BAYOLENTE 'YUNG NILALARO N'YANG VIDEO GAME.
ANAK... NABABAHALA KAMI NG INAY MO D'YAN SA ...
GAMITIN MO 'YUNG CHAINSAW.

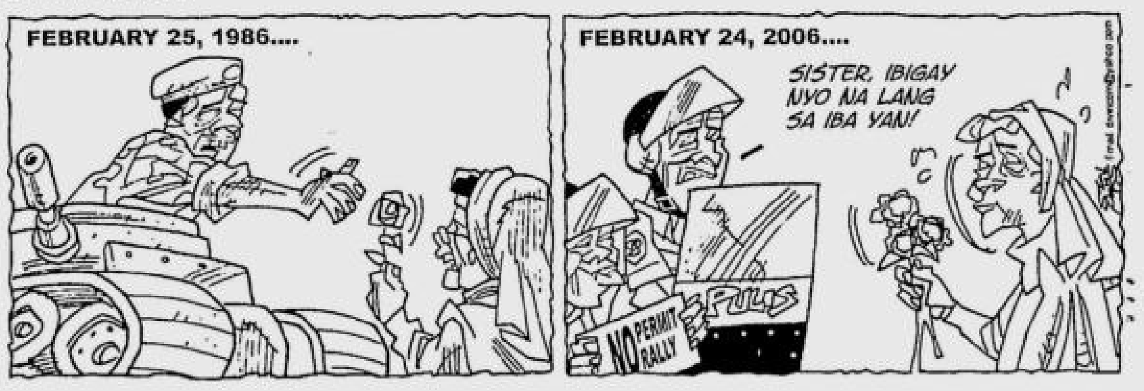
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


MOOCH! HOW WILL YOU ASK FOR FORGIVENESS
?
I'LL GIVE 'EM THE OL' 'PUPPY EYES'
mutttscomics.com
HEY! THAT'S MY TRICK!
3-2
SHORRY.

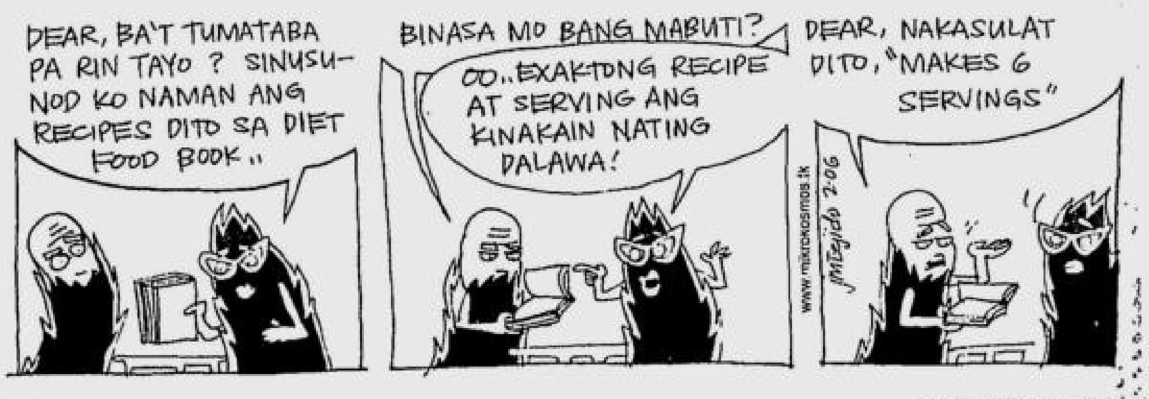
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


FEBRUARY 25, 1986....
FEBRUARY 24, 2006....
SISTER, IBIGAY NYO NA LANG SA IBA YAN!
NO PERMIT RALLY
PULIS

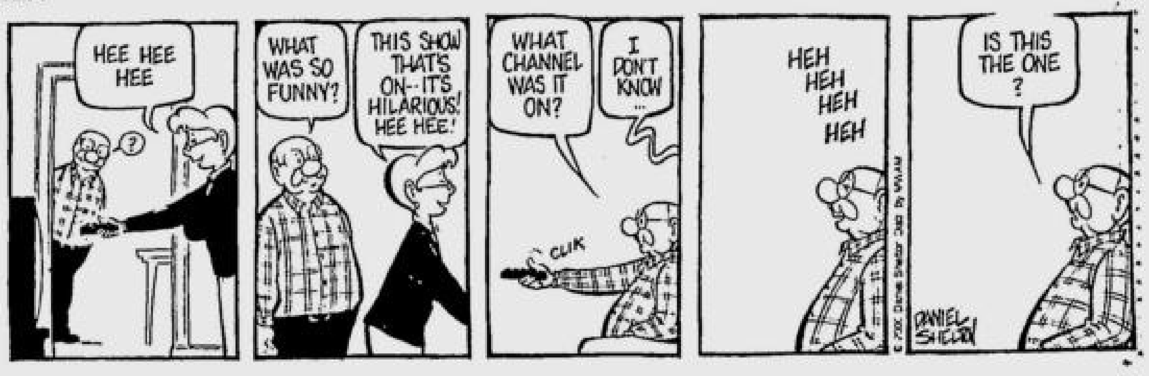
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


DEAR, BA'T TUMATABA PA RIN TAYO ? SINUSUNOD KO NAMAN ANG RECIPES DITO SA DIET FOOD BOOK..
BINASA MO BANG MABUTI?
OO..EXAKTONG RECIPE AT SERVING ANG KINAKAIN NATING DALAWA!
www.mikrokosmos.tk
jmtejido 2-06
DEAR, NAKASULAT DITO, "MAKES 6 SERVINGS"

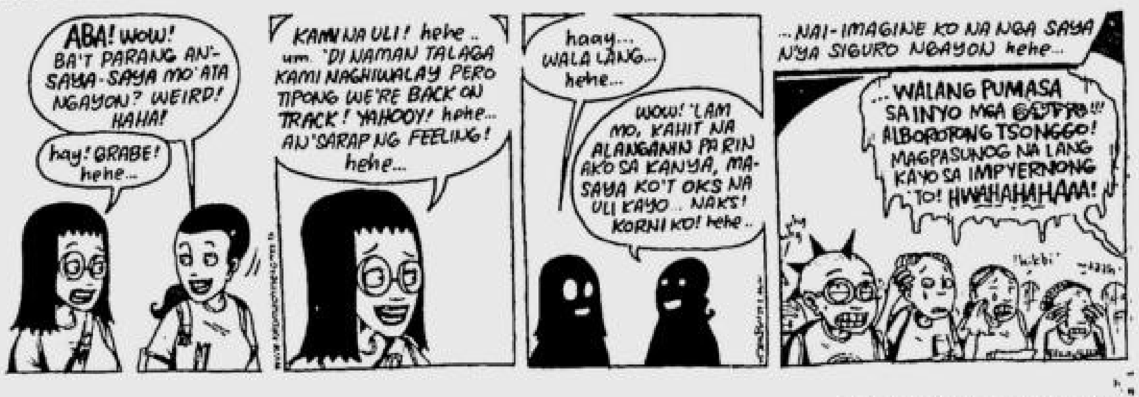
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


HEE HEE HEE
?
WHAT WAS SO FUNNY?
THIS SHOW THAT'S ON--IT'S HILARIOUS! HEE HEE!
WHAT CHANNEL WAS IT ON?
I DON'T KNOW ...
CLIK
HEH HEH HEH HEH
IS THIS THE ONE ?
DANIEL SHELTON

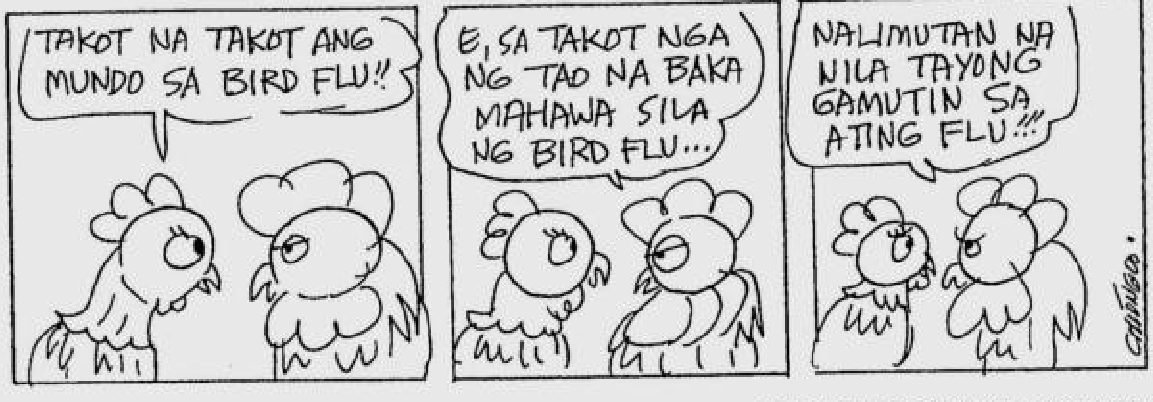
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


ABA! WOW! BA'T PARANG AN-SAYA-SAYA MO ATA NGAYON? WEIRD! HAHA!
hay! GRABE! hehe...
KAMI NA ULI! hehe.. um.. 'DI NAMAN TALAGA KAMI NAGHIWALAY PERO TIPONG WE'RE BACK ON TRACK! YAHOOY! hehe... AN'SARAP NG FEELING! hehe...
haay... WALA LANG... hehe...
WOW! 'LAM MO, KAHIT NA ALANGANIN PA RIN AKO SA KANYA, MASAYA KO'T OKS NA ULI KAYO... NAKS! KORNI KO! hehe..
...NAI-IMAGINE KO NA NGA SAYA N'YA SIGURO NGAYON hehe...
...WALANG PUMASA SA INYO MGA @$%!!! ALBOROTONG TSONGGO! MAGPASUNOG NA LANG KAYO SA IMPYERNONG 'TO! HWAHAHAHAAA!

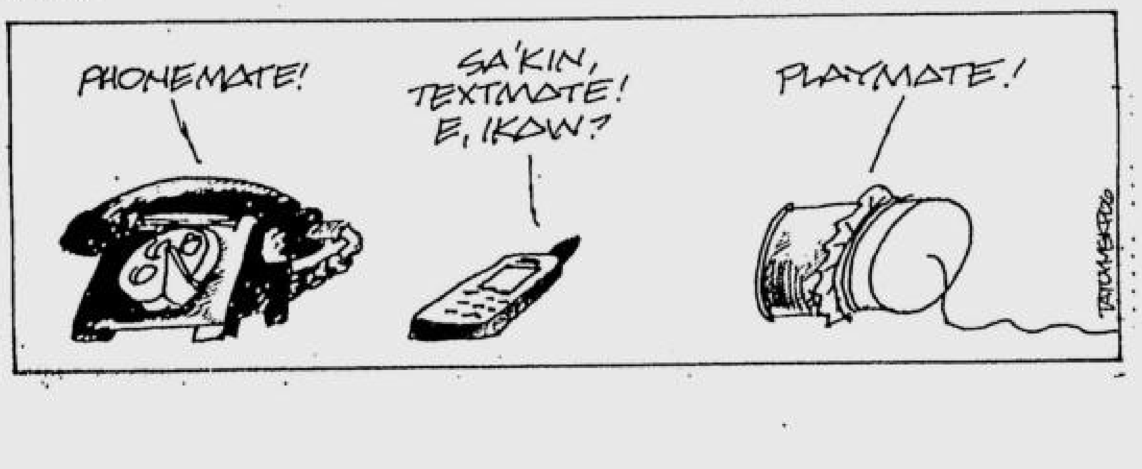
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


TAKOT NA TAKOT ANG MUNDO SA BIRD FLU!!
E, SA TAKOT NGA NG TAO NA BAKA MAHAWA SILA NG BIRD FLU...
NALIMUTAN NA NILA TAYONG GAMUTIN SA ATING FLU!!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


PHONEMATE!
SA'KIN, TEXTMATE! E, IKAW?
PLAYMATE!
TATUM

Echo and Heart often 'missing in action'

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

AN ABS-CBN INSIDER TOLD ME THAT "PANDAY Book 2" may no longer push through because lead stars **Jericho Rosales** and **Heart Evangelista** are usually "missing in action." Heart's being sickly too often and Echo's non-availability has prompted some "Panday" staff to say in jest, "The hospital where Heart is confined must be somewhere in La Union." It turns out that LU is where the lovebirds frequently go surfing. Guess Panday followers have to go surfing, too. Channel surfing, that is—since it looks like their fave show's sequel will never air, huh?

> Insiders say ABS-CBN's 'Panday' sequel may no longer push through

Nasty

Someone close to **Pauleen Luna** told me that **Michelle Madrigal** has been sending her nasty text messages. When Michelle was confronted, she denied it. Hmm… sometimes the more you deny, the more you lie. Is this because of jealousy since the two girls happen to have the same ex-bf, **JC de Vera**? Or could it be out of envy, because Pauleen has more projects? A combination of jealousy and envy turns any girl into a grrrrrl!

Mad Bear

During an out of town taping of "Lagot Ka, Isusumbong Kita," **Bearwin Meilly** got so mad at the production assistant when she informed him that he had to pay for his room service bill (which was not covered by the production). He reportedly shouted at the PA and told her to take care of it. When co-star **Raymart Santiago** heard what happened, he offered to pay, out of pity for the hapless PA. Bearwin was probably embarrassed, so he ended up paying … against his will. Wonder how long they can bear with Bearwin?

MTV awards

The fifth annual MTV Asia Awards will be held on May 6 at Siam Paragon, Thailand's brand new state-of-the-art entertainment complex.

Nigel Robbins, president of MTV Networks Asia-Pacific, said: "We are back again in Bangkok with Asia's premier event. MTV Asia Awards pays tribute to top musical talents in the Asia Pacific region. Thailand, with its rich cultural heritage, is the perfect place to host this event."

Viewers can cast their votes for their faves on the official website: www.mtvasiaawards.com.

My Chemical Romance, reputed for its brilliant, biting and boundary-leaping rock and roll has three nominations. The sensational **James "You're Beautiful" Blunt** is nominated in two categories. Asian stars **Stefanie Sun** (Singapore) and **Jay Chou** (Taiwan) have been nominated for the fifth consecutive year. **Wang Lee Hom** (Taiwan), **Tata Young** (Thailand), **Asha Bhosle** (India), **Too Phat** (Malaysia) are hot favorites as well. Nominees for Fave Artist from the Philippines are Bamboo, Hale, **Kitchie Nadal**, Orange and Lemons and Rivermaya.

This year's program is set in a mythical Asian city of the future and employs animation for the first time. Viewers and fans will be able to take part in an epic cyberpunk story of a quest for missing relics that have the power to restore good to a world gone bad.

Miss Fort Ilocandia

Miss Fort Ilocandia, considered a pathway for major beauty pageants, has produced such standouts as **Anna Marie Falcon**, a.k.a. **Francine Prieto**, who won in 2003.

Winners of this year's pageant will act as ambassador of goodwill for Fort Ilocandia Resort Hotel in Laoag City.

Pre-pageant activities will be held at the Fontana Leisure Parks, Clark Field, Pampanga on March 11. Coronation night will be at Fort Ilocandia on March 18

New biz show

Tired of watching business shows conducted in incomprehensible jargon? RPN 9 premieres "Magnegosyo Tayo" on Friday, March 3 at 6:30 a.m. Hosted by young and bubbly Mr. Fu, the program discusses business ideas, opportunities and trends.

(E-mail wateringholeshangrila@yahoo.com.)

FEEDBACK

FROM JIM WALKER (jikopax@earthlink.net), 4231 Belinda St. Simi Valley, CA 93063

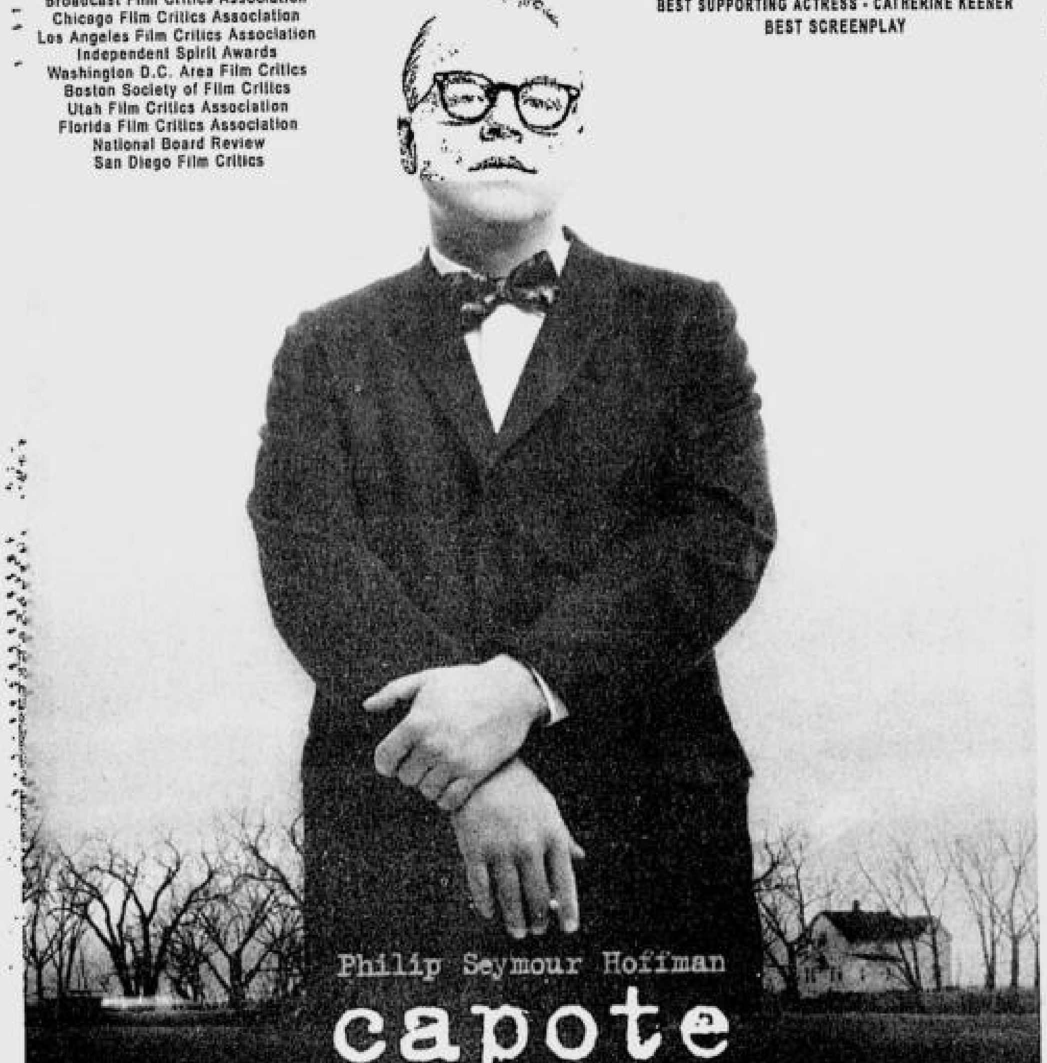
Thank you very much for the article on Cheryl Burke. I think she is one of the best dancers I have ever seen. My wife, who used to be in a dance company many years ago, says that no one nails a routine like Cheryl.

now showing
exclusively at
glorietta 4 & greenbelt 3
mtrcb rating: restricted 13

WINNER
BEST ACTOR
PHILIP SEYMOUR HOFFMAN
Golden Globe
Screen Actors Guild
Broadcast Film Critics Association
Chicago Film Critics Association
Los Angeles Film Critics Association
Independent Spirit Awards
Washington D.C. Area Film Critics
Boston Society of Film Critics
Utah Film Critics Association
Florida Film Critics Association
National Board Review
San Diego Film Critics

WINNER
BEST PICTURE
National Society of Film Critics
Gotham Awards 2005
American Film Institute

NOMINATED FOR
5 ACADEMY AWARDS
INCLUDING
BEST PICTURE
BEST ACTOR - PHILIP SEYMOUR HOFFMAN
BEST DIRECTOR
BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS - CATHERINE KEENER
BEST SCREENPLAY



Philip Seymour Hoffman
capote

"Philip Seymour Hoffman's unmissable & unforgettable performance as Truman Capote makes him the front-runner for every Best Actor prize in the book. Great acting is quicksilver, impossible to pin down in words. But you know it when you see it. And you see it with dazzling clarity in this landmark portrayal. 'CAPOTE' is a movie that doesn't pull its punches. It's a KNOCKOUT"
- Peter Travers, ROLLING STONE

"Two thumbs way up."
EBERT & ROEPER

"A clear, steady gaze graces the smart biopic 'Capote,' which takes a mordant look at Truman Capote at the time he was writing 'In Cold Blood.' It's an etched-in-acid portrait of a writer whose talent was as ruthless as it was brilliant.
— David Ansen, NEWSWEEK

COLUMBIA PICTURES · SONY PICTURES CLASSICS
WWW.UNITEDARTISTS.COM WWW.SONYCLASSICS.COM WWW.CAPOTE-MOVIE.COM

ARANETA CENTER
Gateway · Ali MALL · Farmers Plaza
THE ONLY CINEPLEX IN THE COUNTRY · Gateway CINEPLEX*10 · DOLBY DIGITAL-EX

THE FEARLESS 1:00 / 3:10 / 5:20 / 7:30 / 9:40
PRIDE & PREJUDICE 1:05 / 3:50 / 6:35 / 9:20
PINK PANTHER 2:00 / 4:30 / 7:00 / 9:30
GLOBE PLATINUM CINEMA
FINAL DESTINATION 3 12:50 / 3:00 / 5:10 / 7:20 / 9:30
CLOSE TO YOU 1:50 / 4:20 / 6:50 / 9:20
MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA 1:10 / 4:00 / 6:50 / 9:40
PRIDE & PREJUDICE 12:30 / 3:15 / 6:00 / 8:45
NASAAN SI FRANCIS 1:30 / 3:30 / 5:30 / 7:30 / 9:30
BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN 1:20 / 4:10 / 7:00 / 9:50
BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE 2 1:05 / 3:15 / 5:25 / 7:35 / 9.45
ONLY P120 ADMISSION
GLOBE PLATINUM P249/P299

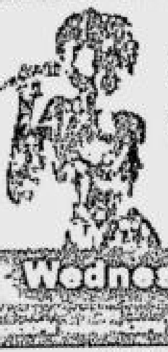
Ali MALL CINEMAS
CLOSE TO YOU 12:30 / 3:00 / 5:30 / 8:00
THE FEARLESS 12:15 R2 / 2:05 / 4:15 / 6:25 / 8:35
BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE 2 12:00 / 2:10 / 4:20 / 6:30 / 8:40
MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA 12:00 / 2:50 / 5:40 / 8:30
NASAAN SI FRANCIS 12:30 / 2:30 / 4:30 / 6:30 / 8:30
DOLBY DIGITAL dts SDDS

For ticket inquiries, please call TicketNet at 911-5555 or log on to www.ticketnet.com.ph

ARANETA COLISEUM
Bb PILIPINAS CORONATION NIGHT
MARCH 4, SATURDAY 8 pm
HERMAN HERMITS - PETER NOONE CONCERT
MARCH 17, FRIDAY 8 pm

INQUIRER TV GUIDE

Thursday, March 2, 2006



Find out who will be the next... American Idol
ON YOUR IDOL NETWORK ABC Iba Tayo!
Wednesday & Thursday 10PM

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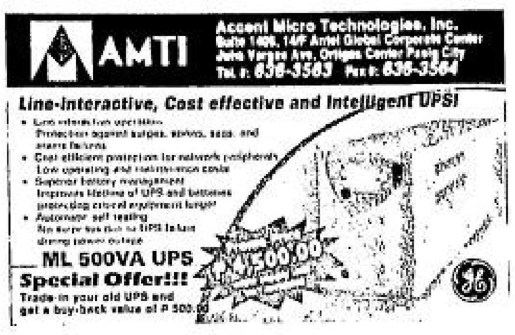
ABC 5			WNCAA (Rerun)		Barclay's EPL		Goals		Senzo	Mumbai Thrillers	SOS		Wala Yan Sa Lolo Ko		Big News	American Idol			
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema			Pasion de Amor	Little Amy	Mr. Bean	Naruto	Amazing Twins		TV Patrol World	Gulong Ng Palad	Sa Piling Mo	Prinsesa Lulu	Pinoy Big Brother		Maalaala Mo Kaya			Insider
AXN		CSI Crime Scene Investigation (Season 5)		CSI Miami (Season II)		30 Seconds To Fame	Samsung Sports World	Lost		Numb3rs (Season I)								The Contender	
Cartoon Network	Johnny Bravo	Dexter's Laboratory	Tom & Jerry Show		Baby Looney Tunes	Codename Kids Next Door	Foster's Home For Imaginary Friends	The Grim Adventures Of Billy & Mandy	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	Power Rangers Wild Force	The Gransazers	Battle B-Daman	Energy Bomb	X-Men Evolution	Samurai Jack	Justice League	Static Shock	Power Rangers Wild Force	The Gransazers
Cinemax		Deep Evil (2:50 PM)			The Trouble With Harry (4:20 PM)			An Officer And A Gentleman				A Kiss Before Dying			Another 48 Hrs.			Nowhere To Run	
CNN				Business International		World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		Business International		World News Asia		World News	World Sport/ Global Office/ CNN Business Traveller	World News Asia		World News	World Sport
Disney Channel	Mr Bean, The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/Untalkative Bunny	Mickey Mouse and Friends	Lilo & Stitch	Sabrina, The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr Bean, The Animated Series	That's So Raven	Wonderful World Of Disney			Lizzie Mcguire		Mickey Mouse and Friends	Chip N Dale's Rescue Ranger	Wonderful World Of Disney	
ESPN		2004 World Summit of Pool NY, NY USA		Pro Billiards '04 BCA Open 9-Ball C'ships Fin.		Winter X Games Classix CO USA	Winter X Games Classix CO USA	In The Driver's Seat	Pool/ Snooker Mosconi Cup 2005		Sportscenter Asia	Sportscenter Asia		In The Driver's Seat	Pool/ Snooker Premier Snooker League '04 England				Sportscenter Asia
ETC		Who Wants To Marry My Dad 2		Change of Heart	Elimidate	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	The Tyra Banks Show		Will & Grace 4	Friends 10	Queer Eye For The Straight Guy		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
EWTN	The Catholic Faith & Vatican II	Angelus (3:15 PM)	Virtue Storybook	Image Of God	Your Vocation God's Call In Your Life	Rosary With Mother Angelica	Good Or Evil-Who Decides?	EWTN Gallery	Where God Weeps	EWTN Live (Encore) With Fr. Mitch Pacwa		Catechisms And Controversies	The Word Was Made Flesh	Daily Mass (SAP) Live		Angelus (10:15PM)	St. Thomas More Faithful Statesman	The Journey Home Encore	
Fox News		Hannity & Colmes		On The Record With Greta Van Susteren		The O'Reilly Factor		Your World With Neil Cavuto		Fox & Friends						Fox News Live			
GMA 7	Kung Mamahalin Mo Lang Ako	Now and Forever	First Love Of A Royale Prince		Dragonball Z	Great Teacher Onizuka	La Robe de Mariage	24 Oras		Extra Challenge	Encantadia	My Name Is Kim Sam Soon	Starstruck 3	Jewel In The Palace		Magpakailanman			Saksi
Hallmark Channel	Bewitched	Sue Thomas: F.B. Eye II					Who's The Boss? II	Bewitched	The Nanny	Strong Medicine		Judging Amy					Judging Amy (10:15PM)		Strong Medicine
HBO				Stepping Out				Phantom Force			Bring It On Again			Dawn Of The Dead			Something's Gotta Give		
IBC 13		EZ Shop				Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Pangarap Kong Jackpot		Home Shopping Network		ME TV		Japan Video Topics		Global Family Series	IBC News Tonite	Home Shopping Network	
JackTV	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	The Late Show David Letterman		Smackdown				JLU	Just For Laughs (Gags)	Mad TV		That 70s Show	Arrested Development	The Late Show David Letterman		The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	Comedy Central Presents	South Park	The Man Show
Lifestyle Network	Secret Gardens	The Fix	Mission Organization	Carol Duvall	Molto Mario	Hot Off The Grill	Good Eats	Extreme Cuisine	Unwrapped	Tyler's Ultimate	E! News Weekend		Life Is Great With Brooke Burke	Life & Style		Your Private Island	Genuine Article	E! True Hollywood Story	
MTV Philippines		MTV Cribs	MTV Hits		Pimp My Ride	Pop Inc			MTV Hits				Get Spotted	TRL		Punk'D	Brand New		VH1 Video Collections
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYX News	MYX Firsts	Star MYX	MYXLOG	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		MYX Presents		MYX Bandarito	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX
National Geographic	Wild Family Secrets	Megastructures		Strange Days On Planet Earth		Edge Of Universe		Top 5 - Mysterious Universe		Wow!		About Asia		National Geographic Specials		Megastructures 3: Dubai's Palm Island		Strange Days On Planet Earth	
NBN		Value Vision		New Life TV Shopping		Teledyaryo	Dyos Ko, Mahal Mo Ba Sila?	Tinig ng Bayan (Live)				Teledyaryo				Network Forum		Bantay OCW With Susan K.	
Nickelodeon	Chalkzone	Hey Arnold!	Rocket Power	Four Eyes	My Life As A Teenage Robot	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	Drake & Josh	Naturally Sadie	Romeo	All That	All Grown Up	As Told By Ginger	Four Eyes	My Life As A Teenage Robot	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	My Dad The Rock Star	
PBO			Doll Master		Masikip Madam Ang Kahapon				Time For Revenge				Tusong Twosome				Minsan Matalo Mahal Kita		
Qtv	Ikaw Lang Ang Mamahalin		Zentrix	The Prince Of Tennis	MMS (My Music Station)		Moms		Love At Aegean Sea	Irene	Mars	Laugh To Laugh: Ang Kulit	O, Mare Ko		News On Q	Women's Desk		MINT (Music Interactive)	
RPN 9	TV Shopping		Defenders Of The Earth	Global Window				Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	WWE Smackdown		The Ultimate Fighter		Revelations		Newswatch Now	Just For Laughs (Gags)	Kasangga Mo Ang Langit	Poker Hour
SBN 21				New Life TV Shopping				Winner TV Shopping				Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Katotohanan		Friends Again		SBN Music Video	
Solar Sports		All England 2006 SF					NBA Game Magic @ Lakers					NBA Game 76ers @ Rockets					Sportsdesk	PBO Day2 Recap	NBA Jam
Sports Plus	NBA Game New Orleans @ Seattle					Party Poker.com World Open 2005					Slipstream	World's Greatest Auto Shows		World Game		Ray Ban Celebrity Poker Challenge			
Star Movies			Species (3:45 PM)				Heart Of The Storm			Welcome To Mooseport (7:10 PM)				City Slickers				Dodgeball: A True Underdog Story (10:35PM)	
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		General Hospital		Angel		American Idol 2006		Star News Asia	Friends (Series 10)	American Idol 2006		2006 48th Annual Grammy Awards Live!				Friends (Series 10)	American Idol 2006
Studio 23		Yugioh Duel Monster		UAAP				Batman Beyond	Spirits	Wazzup Wazzup	The Contender		Alias (8:20 PM)	Desperate Housewives (8:10 PM)		News Central	Oprah		Salt

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.



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Peso rallies to 51.38 against the dollar

Traders urged to ignore political noise

By Ronnel W. Domingo

FAVILA

THE GOVERNMENT HAS NO plans of taking over private firms and businesses should carry on as usual despite the national emergency, according to Trade Secretary Peter B. Favila.

The trade chief called on business leaders to ignore "the heightened political noise."

"(It is still the) free market forces that dictate the prices of basic commodities and business firms remain unhampered doing their daily transactions," Favila said.

"The government is mindful of the nation's tenet on free enterprise and that the economy would develop further if nurtured in an environment of a level playing field," he added.

The official challenged businessmen to be catalysts in greater economic productivity and belie predictions of an economic downturn.

He said businesses should not go jittery easily due to dissent from different sectors, but rather should look at the opportunities presented by developments during recent days.

On Tuesday, the Employers Confederation of the Philippines called for a periodic assessment of the state of national emergency, hoping that it would be lifted soon to alleviate concern among investors.

Ecop said foreign investors have become reluctant to pour in capital and firms with foreign equity were inclined to put on hold expansion plans because of Presidential Proclamation No. 1017.

In particular, the group expressed concern about a possible shakedown of businesses amid threats that the government could take over private firms such as public utilities.

Favila downplayed these fears, saying businesses should not lose focus on "the real issue," which is to make profitable ventures.

Still, the trade chief said there had been so far no sign that the political unrest had disrupted the normal course of doing business.

"Our field reports from various provinces reported that prices and supply of commodities in the market are stable," he said. "Our international trade is not affected as I have yet to receive a complaint from businessmen that their export shipments from the Philippines are being delayed."

Highest level in more than 3 years

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PESO YESTERDAY RALLIED TO A NEW THREE-AND-A-HALF-year high of 51.36 before closing at 51.38 against the dollar, ignoring domestic political concerns while riding on bullish regional currency markets.

Market analysts said the political tension that dragged the peso to 52.30 to $1 on Friday was dissipating and the peso could resume its uptrend to 50, and even further to the 48 level.

The peso opened at 51.48 and hit an intraday low of 51.545 before closing at 51.38, its highest finish since the 51.30 to a dollar on Aug. 2, 2002. It thus gained another 27 centavos from Tuesday's closing of 51.65:$1.

Volume traded at the Philippine Dealing System surged to $808.27 million from the previous day's $621.61 million.

Banco de Oro Universal Bank chief strategist Jonathan Ravelas said the next technical barrier at the spot foreign exchange market was at 51-51.10 to a dollar. "The present move seems to be targeting the 50.40-50.45 levels," he said.

Goldman Sachs analyst Adam Le Mesurier said the political developments after last weekend's upheaval supported an even more bullish outlook for the peso.

The US investment bank revised its forecast for the peso for the next three months to 51 from 52.50 and expected the currency to appreciate further to 49 in six months and to 48 in 12 months versus its original forecast of 52 for the next six to 12 months.

"We believe the noise will remain constant, but the signal/noise ratio is clearly falling, as the macro economy continues to enter a recovery phase," Le Mesurier said.

"The interesting element to the Philippine story is that the government does not appear to resist the pressure for real exchange rate appreciation—the political alignment is in the same direction as fundamentals," he added.

PESO/ B2

BIR probes placement firms for tax evasion

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE HAS started investigating the tax compliance of recruitment agencies, whose earnings were seen to have risen due to the growing number of Filipino workers sent abroad, following reports of rampant under-declaration of incomes.

Revenue Commissioner Jose Mario Buñag said he has directed tax auditors to check on the income tax returns filed by recruitment firms and compare them with information from third-party sources to see whether the declared incomes were accurate.

The BIR was prompted to make an inquiry into the tax compliance of recruitment firms after receiving reports from concerned citizens that many of the recruitment firms had been cheating the government of substantial taxes, he said.

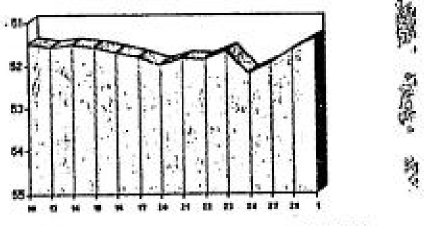
Quoting government records on overseas deployment, Buñag said the number of Filipinos sent abroad last year rose to 981,337 from only 941,722 the previous year.

The growing number of overseas Filipino

BIR LOWERS/ B2

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱ 51.38= $1

As of 5 p.m., March 1, 2006

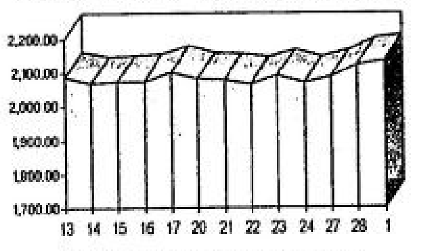
¥ 115.84 = $1

As of 5 p.m., March 1, 2006

GOLD: $554.60-555.10

per ounce Hong Kong, Feb. 28, 2006

STOCK MARKET



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Shares close higher

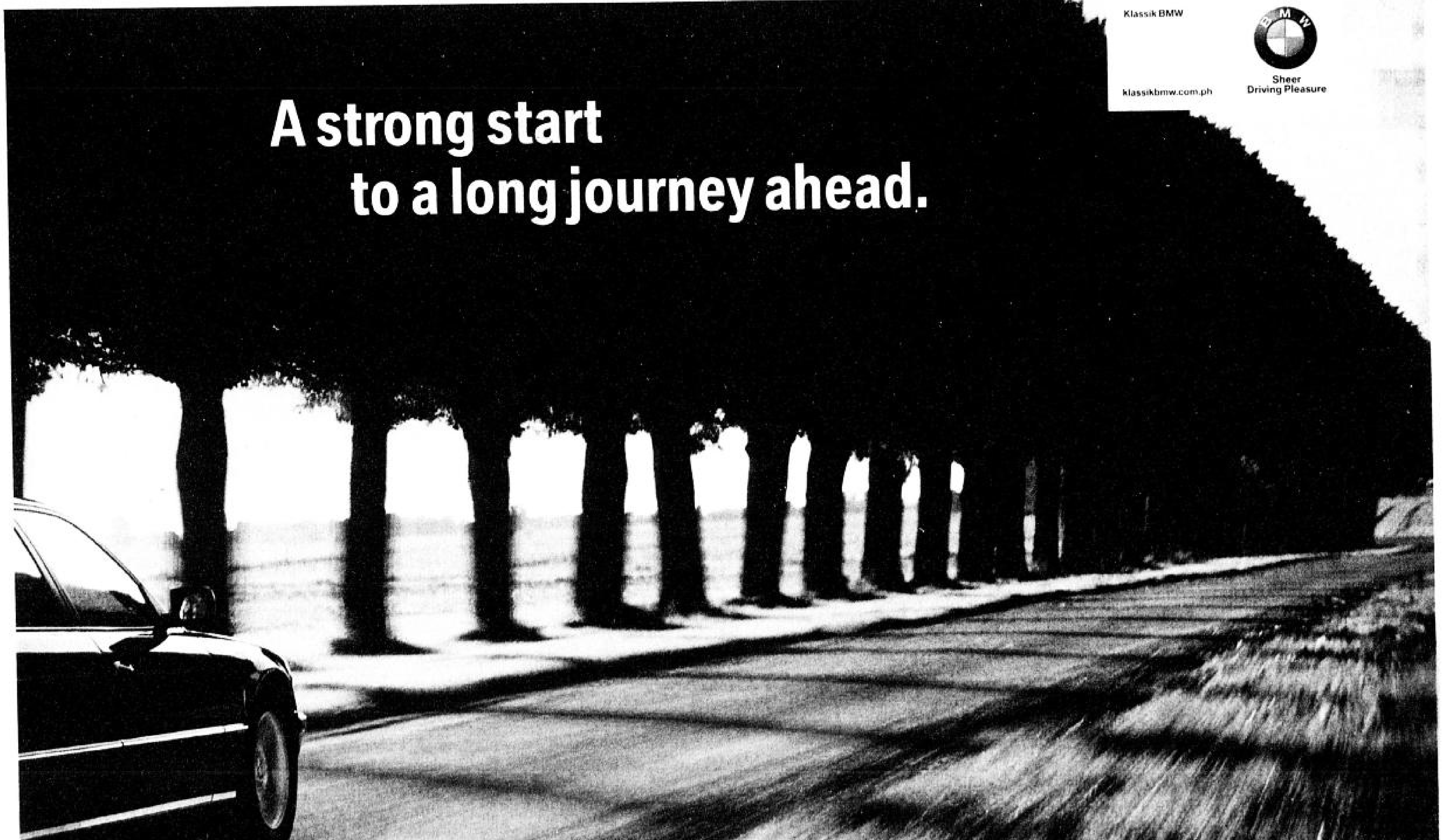
SHARE PRICES CLOSED 0.58-percent higher after President Macapagal-Arroyo said she would give up emergency powers at the earliest possible time, helping to ease political concerns, dealers said.

The composite index added 12.31 points at 2,135.27, its highest level in a month. It traded between 2,122.96 and 2,138.33. Wednesday's close is the index's highest finish since Feb. 3, when it closed at 2,138.71.

The broader all-shares index, however, retreated 4.36 points to 1,024.33

SHARES/ B2

WHAT'S INSIDE
'Texting' seen to boost price monitoring efforts /B3
Peza investments up 27.6% /B6



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Banco de horror

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

NOT MANY OF US KNOW THAT the SM group of mall operator Henry Sy already used the "M" word to raise a lot of money abroad—about P6 billion.

That "M" is the touchy "merger" which Tessie Sy, daughter of Henry Sy, wants to do between the SM-owned Banco de Oro (BDO) and Equitable PCI Bank (EPCIB).

The "merger" is the Sy family's way of taking over EPICB without them spending a centavo, since they only need the "cooperation" of the SSS and the GSIS.

Those pension funds invested P20 billion of their members' money in EPCIB. Luckily for the members, the GSIS is not dancing with Tessie Sy.

And so it seems Tessie Sy is having a hard time pushing for it, despite the reported help of two "godfathers" who are close (even "related") to this cute administration of Gloriaetta.

Still, even before the merger can happen, the SM group used it to sell abroad so-called global depository receipts, or GDRs, worth about P6 billion.

The Australia-based investment bank Macquarie handled the issuance, but our info is, somebody high in BDO used the "M" word during the roadshow.

Whether such a tactic helped Macquarie in selling the SM group's GDRs is hard to say at this point. It only tells us that the SM group really craves for EPCIB.

* * *

SO there you are: The SM group, at some point, was quite certain of accomplishing the merger, even daring to use it as the come-on to get other people's money abroad.

And the group almost did, actually, except that GSIS president and general manager Winston Garcia, a Cebu hometown boy, dared to fight Tessie Sy, named by Fortune magazine as one of the 50 most powerful women in the world.

This month, GSIS is to hold a bidding for its 12-percent interest in EPCIB, plus maybe the controversial 10 percent in "treasury shares."

If those shares slip out of the hands of Tessie Sy, she will have a hard time in effecting the merger. The buyer—whoever he is—will never agree with the takeover thinly disguised as merger.

At the moment, Tessie Sy only enjoys the "cooperation" of the other pension fund, the SSS, through its boss Cora dela Paz.

Together, in fact, the SM group and the SSS recently elected Dela Paz chair of the EPICB board.

The accountant Dela Paz even announced that she was the right woman for the job, since the bank will implement the "international accounting standard."

By the way, the United States rejected it. And so EPCIB wants to do something that everybody in the US will not do.

* * *

NOW Dela Paz is the same SSS boss who looked the other way when EPCIB gave away P100 million as retirement pay to its former chair and president.

That was right after the Sy family bought out the Go family in EPCIB last year. Was the P100 million retirement package part of the deal? It's hard to say.

Still, as the "right woman for the job," Dela Paz should have questioned it. She owed it to the millions of SSS members who contribute hard-earned money to the SSS.

From what I gathered, a good part of the "retirement package" was already spent for PR, legal expenses, and "retainers" even before it was awarded.

Incidentally, a big law firm is readying a libel suit against the INQUIRER, allegedly for reporting and commenting on EPCIB deals—some eight months ago.

And they are suing only now, just as Tessie Sy got frustrated over the merger. I mean, does the timing suck or what?

* * *

WHETHER the lawyers like it or not, the "merger" is nothing but a hostile takeover, designed to ease the SSS and the GSIS out of the bank.

And if you were Dela Paz, who has danced, is dancing and will likely dance with Tessie Sy for a long time, how do you explain it to SSS members?

The SSS and the GSIS put in P20 billion in the bank. That's double the outlay of the Sy family at about P10 billion. And Dela Paz allows the SM group to control the bank.

Horror of horrors, the BDO people have complete control of EPCIB. The chair of the executive committee is Tessie Sy, who was chair of BDO. The chair of the credit committee is Josefina Tan, former executive of BDO. SM group nominee to the EPCI board, Exequiel Villacorta Jr., who chairs EPCIB Investment, which keeps the 10-percent "treasury shares," is a former president of BDO. Jess Tirona, head of the LGU fund, an "independent" director of EPCIB, was the first president of BDO, when it was still a savings bank.

They are in control of the very same bank that the SM group wanted to gobble up by diluting the SSS and the GSIS and the public investors.

That, in other countries, is a NO-NO! You can never tell what trade secrets such a group can steal from the bank, for instance. You don't allow a competitor inside your house, not even just in the garage. In this case, the SM group does not just go straight to the kitchen. It is even in charge.

And Dela Paz decides always to side with the group? Hmmm.

Again, the SSS and the GSIS have some P20 billion sank in the bank. And yet SM group has complete control of the bank.

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Contract for Security Services of PRO IV-B
ITB# PRO4B-06-002

The **PHILHEALTH REGIONAL OFFICE IV-B (PRO IV-B)** through the corporate operating budget of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation 2006 intends to apply the sum of **two million seven hundred fifteen thousand one hundred pesos** (P2,715,100.00) being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for Security Services. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid Opening.

The **PRO IV-B** now invites Bids from eligible bidders for Security Services. This contract shall take effect on **April 1, 2006 until December 31, 2006** The description of an eligible bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organization of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder of the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.

Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the PhilHealth Regional Office IV-B and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee in the amount of **two thousand seven hundred pesos (P 2,700.00)**. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.

The PRO IV-B will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on **March 14, 2006, 2:00 p.m.** at the 3rd floor, Conference Room, PhilHealth Regional Office IV-B.

Bids and Eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before **March 27, 2006, 11:00 a.m.** Late bids shall not be accepted. All bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in any of the following forms and amount.

Form of Security	Minimum Amount in % of ABC to be Bid
1. Cash, certified check, cashier's check, manager's check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit.	One percent (1%)
2. Bank Guarantee	One and a half percent (1 1/2%)

Bid opening shall be on **March 27, 2006, 2:00 p.m.** at the 3rd Floor, Conference Room, PhilHealth Regional Office IV-B. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidder's representatives who choose to attend at the address below.

The PRO IV-B reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Rhonalyn Marasigan / Johnrey Iguiron (BAC Secretariats)
PhilHealth Regional Office IV-B
PSDC Bldg. #89 P. Burgos corner Alegre Sts., Batangas City
Tel. No. (043)723-8822 loc. 201
Facsimile No. (043)723-8822 loc. 409
e-mail address: region4b@philhealth.gov.ph

(Sgd) CIRILO C. BALMACEDA
Chairperson, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI- March 2 & 9. 2006)

Peso rallies to 51.38 against the dollar

From page B1

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. told reporters at the sidelines of a luncheon hosted by AB Capital that the sharp appreciation was market-driven and did not require any intervention from the BSP.

"The movement of the peso last Friday was a knee-jerk reaction to developments at that time. The market has corrected and has been correcting since Monday," Tetangco said.

Malacañang declared a state of national emergency on Friday to thwart coup threats while political tension escalated Sunday when the commandant of the Philippine Marines was relieved.

"The improvement is due to a number of factors, number one would be the continuation of foreign exchange inflows. We have seen portfolio inflows come in, so this is consistent with what's happening in the stock market where the index has also improved. Part of the inflows have gone to the government securities market and some portion to the money market," Tetangco said.

"At the same time, we've seen exporter dollar sales and also overseas Filipino workers' remittances. On the outflow side, there's very moderate corporate demand," the BSP chief said.

In early morning trade yesterday, Tetangco said the strengthening of Asian currencies against the US dollar was a key factor that boosted the peso.

Asked whether the peso would appreciate further, Tetangco reiterated that it would depend on the inflow of foreign exchange as well as the performance of regional markets versus the US dollar.

"For this year, we're projecting a BOP (balance-of-payments) surplus and with this, I think there's reason to expect further support for the peso," Tetangco said.

The BOP measures the foreign exchange transactions between the domestic economy and the rest of the world.

"If Asian currencies strengthen versus the US dollar, that will also provide support. I think what's important is (to make) the market believe that the economic reform agenda is going to be sustained," he said.

BIR probes …

From page B1

workers was also reflected in the significant increase in dollar remittances last year. The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas earlier reported that OFWs sent an all-time high of $10.7 billion last year, or 25 percent higher than the previous year's.

An increase in the number of overseas employment contracts should mean higher incomes for recruitment firms, and therefore higher income tax collection by the BIR.

But Buñag said initial indications from the ongoing tax-compliance inquiry showed that the increase in the number of deployments was not commensurate with the recruitment firms' tax remittances.

He declined to give specific amounts of unremitted taxes, saying the BIR was still in the process of computing.

"Let me warn erring placement agencies, whether they be deploying land-based or sea-based workers, that the BIR is vigorously pursuing tax evasion cases against tax cheats, no matter what sector they belong to," he said.

The BIR, which accounts for about 60 percent of the national government's revenues, is hard-pressed to carry out a strong anti-tax evasion campaign following the huge revenue shortfall it incurred last year.

Tax leakages arising from both tax evasion and inefficiencies in tax collections were estimated at P100 billion a year.

The BIR collected only P534.5 billion last year, falling short of its P546.9-billion target.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of March 1, 2006)

NAME	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
FINANCIAL					
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	34.5	34.5	34	34	617,700
Bank of the Phil. Islands	59	59.5	59	59.5	710,900
China Banking Corp.	655	655	655	655	800
Citystate Savings Bank	19	19	19	19	300
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.5	0.5	0.48	0.49	10,940,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	64.5	64.5	64.5	64.5	42,800
International Exch. Bank	24.25	25.5	24.25	25	187,200
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	35	36.5	35	36	1,962,000
Philippine National Bank	31	31	31	31	5,000
Phil. Savings Bank	35	35	35	35	700
Security Bank Corp.	37	37.5	37	37.5	6,100
Union Bank of the Phil.	33.5	33.5	33.5	33.5	12,000
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
Bankard Inc.	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	10,000
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1	1	1	1	500,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	149	149	149	149	140
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2215	2220	2215	2220	550
Ivantage Corp.	0.81	0.81	0.8	0.8	240,000
INDUSTRIAL					
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
First Gen Corp.	45	45	44.5	44.5	82,700
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	42	43.5	42	42.5	1,122,900
Manila Electric Co. A	12.5	13	12.5	13	133,100
Manila Electric Co. B	18.5	19.5	18.5	19.5	978,600
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.3	6.4	6.3	6.4	1,467,000
Petron Corp.	4.55	4.65	4.55	4.6	4,955,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.235	0.235	0.235	0.235	210,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.91	0.91	0.9	0.91	7,620,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	20	20.25	20	20.25	57,200
Jollibee Foods Corp.	35.5	36.5	35.5	36.5	131,700
Roxas Holdings Inc.	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	83,000
San Miguel Corp. A	61.5	62	61.5	62	53,500
San Miguel Corp. B	83	84	83	84	467,700
Tanduay Holdings Inc.	3	3	3	3	5,000
Universal Robina Corp.	18	18.25	18	18	2,142,200
Vitarich Corp.	0.28	0.29	0.28	0.28	190,000
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	0.31	0.32	0.31	0.31	2,890,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	1.3	1.3	1.26	1.28	884,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.15	4.2	4.1	4.15	835,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Global Equities Inc.	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	1,200,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.37	0.38	0.36	0.37	980,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0075	0.008	0.0075	0.008	11,000,000
Ayala Corp.	325	335	325	332.5	266,500
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	4.85	4.9	4.85	4.85	203,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	11	11.5	11	11.5	1,500
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.024	0.024	0.024	0.024	9,400,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.32	2.36	2.32	2.36	420,000
APC Group Inc.	0.215	0.215	0.215	0.215	330,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.89	0.89	0.88	0.89	800,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	10,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	8.7	8.7	8.7	8.7	2,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.98	0.99	0.98	0.98	6,410,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.1	3.2	3.05	3.15	1,512,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.82	1.86	1.82	1.84	251,000
House of Investments Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	150,000
JG Summit Holdings Inc.	4.7	4.75	4.7	4.75	101,000
Mabuhay Holdings Corp.	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	100,000
Pacifica	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	17,200,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.245	0.245	0.24	0.24	14,870,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.51	0.51	0.5	0.51	610,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.13	0.135	0.13	0.135	1,720,000
SM Investments Corp.	225	227	224	227	1,280,370
South China Resources Inc.	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	100,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	2,300,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	11.5	11.75	11.25	11.5	4,664,400
Belle Corp.	0.97	0.97	0.97	0.97	720,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.235	0.235	0.23	0.235	4,280,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1.72	1.78	1.68	1.78	6,674,000
C&P Homes Inc.	1.76	1.8	1.68	1.78	83,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.22	0.23	0.22	0.22	3,650,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	300,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.45	0.46	0.45	0.46	5,280,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.68	0.68	0.67	0.67	250,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.22	1.24	1.22	1.22	4,021,000
Gotesco Land Inc.	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	100,000
Interport Res.	0.0042	0.0042	0.0042	0.0042	20,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.0044	0.0044	0.0044	0.0044	3,000,000
Keppel Phils. Prop. Inc.	0.76	0.77	0.76	0.77	100,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.44	0.45	0.44	0.45	2,110,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.019	0.019	0.019	0.019	900,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.4	1.44	1.38	1.42	13,248,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.34	0.35	0.33	0.34	21,230,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.31	0.34	0.31	0.33	16,350,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	12,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.215	0.225	0.21	0.225	12,980,000
SM Development Corp.	1.4	1.42	1.4	1.42	24,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	8	8.1	7.9	7.9	2,906,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	2,180,000
SERVICE					
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	11.25	11.25	11.25	11.25	15,500
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.9	0.9	0.89	0.9	540,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	880	885	875	880	65,960
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.3	3.3	3.25	3.25	1,172,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1800	1800	1775	1780	155,100
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.16	0.16	0.155	0.155	1,600,000
Ionics Inc.	1.24	1.24	1.24	1.24	40,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.043	0.043	0.043	0.043	3,300,000
Ism Communications Corp.	0.0525	0.0525	0.0525	0.0525	100,000
Philweb Corp.	0.027	0.027	0.026	0.027	156,200,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.66	1.66	1.66	1.66	63,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	11.5	11.5	11.5	11.5	690,500
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	1.02	1.02	0.95	0.98	5,670,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.26	1.26	1.26	1.26	2,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.74	1.74	1.72	1.74	922,000
Philippine Racing Club	3.15	3.15	3.15	3.15	100,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.39	0.41	0.39	0.4	4,840,000
EDUCATION					
Ipeople Inc.	3.15	3.15	3.15	3.15	20,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Paxys Inc.	7.9	7.9	7.7	7.7	424,000
MINING & OIL					
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	1	1	1	1	400,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	1.16	1.16	1.12	1.12	560,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	5,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	6.5	6.6	6.5	6.6	897,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.21	0.215	0.2	0.2	1,330,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.25	0.26	0.25	0.25	5,670,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.016	0.016	0.016	0.016	22,500,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.024	0.024	0.024	0.024	5,000,000
Omico Corp.	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	89,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.68	1.68	1.66	1.66	2,540,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.84	1.84	1.78	1.8	5,695,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	27	27	27	27	72,900
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	560,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.32	0.32	0.31	0.31	290,000
OIL					
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.25	0.25	0.24	0.245	7,310,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	211,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	174,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.46	0.46	0.46	0.46	140,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	200,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	40,000
PREFERRED					
PLDT (10% Pref) Series J	10	10	10	10	100
PLDT (10% Pref.) Series U	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	3,400
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,600
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,100
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	4,000
WARRANTS, PHIL. DEPOSIT RECEIPTS, ETC.					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	11.25	11.25	11.25	11.25	64,200
SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES					
Cashrounds Inc.	5.9	5.9	5.9	5.9	1,000

CURRENCIES

March 1, 2006 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.839137	1.000000	51.7250
Japan	Yen	0.007248	0.008638	0.4468
United Kingdom	Pound	1.471679	1.753800	90.7153
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.108159	0.128893	6.6670
Switzerland	Franc	0.639440	0.762021	39.4155
Canada	Dollar	0.738352	0.879894	45.5125
Singapore	Dollar	0.517379	0.616561	31.8916
Australia	Dollar	0.623060	0.742501	38.4059
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.226715	2.653576	137.2562
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.223764	0.266660	13.7930
Brunei	Dollar	0.515789	0.614666	31.7936
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000091	0.000109	0.0056
Thailand	Baht	0.021446	0.025557	1.3219
UAE	Dirham	0.228467	0.272264	14.0829
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.191700	61.6407
Argentina	Peso	0.273335	0.325733	16.8485
Brazil	Real	0.393223	0.468604	24.2385
Denmark	Kroner	0.134019	0.159711	8.2611
India	Rupee	0.018980	0.022619	1.1700
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.225939	0.269251	13.9270
Mexico	New Peso	0.080090	0.095443	4.9368
New Zealand	Dollar	0.556015	0.662603	34.2731
South Africa	Rand	0.136146	0.162245	8.3921
Korea	Won	0.000864	0.001030	0.0533
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.025898	0.030863	1.5964

Shares close higher

From page B1

Gainers outnumbered losers 47 to 33, while 51 stocks were unchanged.

Volume reached 945.23 million shares worth P1.28 billion.

"There has been follow-through buying," said James Lago of Westlink Global Equities. "The general consensus among foreign investors was that they are staying put." But profit-taking would likely set in after three days of gains, he added.

Jose Vistan of AB Capital Securities said hopes of a swift end to the security crisis boosted market sentiment.

"A lifting of the state of emergency would definitely ease the worries among investors and may lead to some more buying. But we're also seeing some instances of profit-taking along the way," Vistan said.

SM Investments was top-traded, ending up P2 at P227, while second most active PLDT shed P5 at P1,780.

AFP

'Texting' seen to boost price monitoring efforts

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE DEPARTMENT OF TRADE and Industry is making use of the text messaging services offered by telecom firms to step up the agency's price monitoring operations.

Trade Undersecretary Zenaida Maglaya, who is in charge of consumer welfare, said the program dubbed `Text DTI Presyo' would provide people instantaneous access to data related to the prevailing prices of basic goods in selected public markets.

Maglaya said the project was created as part of the DTI's regular information dissemination campaign to protect the consuming public from abusive retailers.

"Equipping consumers with the right information keeps them on guard against unfair practices in the market," she said.

KEEPING consumers on guard against unfair trade practices.

"We are taking our campaign a notch higher by coming up with a text-based service that is convenient and easy to use."

She said mobile phone technology was an effective medium for the department's consumer advocacy efforts as shown by its text-based consumer assistance system, TextDTI, which had been receiving as many as 30 complaints or queries from consumers daily.

She explained that by text messaging, consumers could learn about the prevailing prices of basic goods from 32 wet markets in Metro Manila and several markets in Cebu and Davao.

The service covers selected brands of canned fish, corned beef, condensed milk, instant noodles, soy sauce, detergent bar and other DTI-monitored commodities under the Price Act.

To use the service, the consumer could simply send a text message-at P2.50 each—composed of a string of keywords to 2256 and the needed information would be sent in the answer.

Consumers may call the DTI hotline 751-3330 to know more about the instructions and keywords for using the service.

"We are already preparing to expand the list of markets covered by Text DTI Presyo so that more consumers nationwide will be able to benefit from it," Maglaya said.

The program is being carried out with the help of major telecommunication companies Globe Telecom, Smart Communication, Digitel and Sun Cellular.

The service has been available to Globe and Sun Cellular subscribers since Jan. 31, and to Smart users starting Feb. 16.

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Globe steps up drive vs illegal voice calls resale

By Daxim L. Lucas

GLOBE TELECOM INC. IS CRACKING down on the unauthorized resale of international voice calls which, the company claims, deprives it of over P1 million in potential revenue monthly.

As part of the crackdown, Globe recently filed criminal charges against two Singaporean nationals and their two Filipino employees caught operating such a scheme.

Charged with violating Article 318 of the Revised Penal Code or the Anti-Access Device Law were Yong Fok Cheong aka "Norman Yong," William Yong aka "William Yeung," Raymong Naka and Ramy Lozada, the company said in a statement.

According to Globe, the suspects were apprehended during a raid at their office in Rooms 43 and 34 Leelin Building, Pasong Tamo Ave., Makati City by a task force composed of personnel from Globe's legal, technical (fraud) and security departments as well as those from the Philippine National Police's Criminal Investigation and Detection Group.

Discovered during the raid were electronic equipment that were used to connect calls from other countries to local land line customers using postpaid cellular phone lines from Globe. Such calls did not pass through the switching facilities of licensed operators.

The seized items such as Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and GSM (Global System for Mobile Communications) equipment are stored at PND-CIDG pending disposition of the court.

The GSM equipment alone can accommodate 128 Globe SIM cards every one and a half hours. Globe Autoload Max SIM cards were also used in the illegal international simple resale (ISR) operations.

Renewable Energy Act OKd

By Abigail L. Ho

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITtee on energy has approved the Renewable Energy Act of 2006, which seeks to promote the development and use of the country's renewable energy resources.

House committee on energy chair Alipio Cirilo Badelles said the bill was approved Tuesday, more than a year after the technical working group on renewable energy was convened "to harmonize contentious provisions on the various RE bills and come up with a draft substitute bill."

Members of the group, which included representatives from various government agencies and private entities, supported the approval of the bill as long as its fiscal and non-fiscal incentives provision would be implemented, and the overall renewable energy program would be efficient, he said.

The bill was aimed at providing an institutional framework and infrastructure that would encourage potential investors to commercially develop the country's indigenous energy resources—such as wind, solar, hydro, geothermal, ocean, biomass, and other emerging energy sources—using new technologies.

To attract investors to infuse cash into indigenous energy resource development, the bill offers investors various perks such as tax holidays, duty-free importation of machinery and equipment, and exemptions from value-added and real property taxes.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
Maynila, Pilipinas

BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites suppliers/manufacturers/distributors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

Name of Project/ Brief Description	213,400 pcs. - Canvas Bag, 25 sentimo denomination Size: 290mmW x 370mmH (inside dimension) 300mmW x 380mmH (outside dimension)
Approved Budget for the Contract	P3,000,000.00
Contract Duration	Staggered delivery as follows: 1st delivery on or before April 30, 2006 - 80,000 pcs. 2nd delivery on or before June 30, 2006 - 70,000 pcs. Final delivery on or before October 31, 2006 - 63,400 pcs.

Prospective bidders should have undertaken a similar project within the last five (5) years with an amount of at least 50% of the Approved Budget for the Contract. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR)

The complete schedule of activities is listed, as follows:

Activities	*Schedule*
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	1 March to 16 March 2006
2. Pre-bid Conference	17 March 2006, 9.30 AM
3. Opening of Bids	4 April 2006, 2.00 PM
4. Bid Evaluation	) These shall be in accordance with the prescribed) periods allowed in the Implementing Rules &) Regulations (IRR)-A of R.A. No. 9184 dated) 10 January 2003
5. Post-qualification	
6. Notice of Award	

Bid Documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of a non-refundable amount of **P1,500.00** to the BSP Cashier.

The BSP assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

The BSP reserves the right to reject any and all bid proposals, or declare the bidding a failure, or not award the contract, and makes no assurance that a contract shall be entered into as a result of this invitation.

(Sgd.) JUAN DE ZUÑIGA, JR.
Chairman

(PDI - March 2, 2006)

ROUND-UP

Lafayette expects lifting of suspension

LAFAYETTE MINING PHILIPPINES said it hoped to resume operations next month as it neared completion of all environmental requirements set by the government.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources, according to Lafayette Philippines president and CEO Carlos G. Dominguez, is expected to lift the suspension on the company's operations when it meets all the requirements.

Dominguez said the company had already submitted a comprehensive pollution control program that contained provisions on budget and antipollution facility, a surety bond equivalent to 25 percent of the total cost of the pollution control program, a detailed description of the interim remedial measure to mitigate the pollution problems, and proof of employment of a pollution control officer accredited by the DENR

"In three to four weeks, we will complete the installation of a higher tailings dam wall from 125 meters to 134 meters," Dominguez noted. Lafayette was supposed to have started the operations of its base metals plant last December. The plant has the capacity to process 10,000 metric tons (MT) of copper concentrates and 14,000 MT of zinc concentrates yearly during the entire six-year mine life of Rapu-Rapu. ***Christine A. Gaylican***

Petron gets PRS 'Aaa' rating

PHILRATINGS has given industry leader Petron Corp. a credit rating of PRS 'Aaa,' the highest on the local ratings firm's scale.

The agency cited Petron's strong market leadership, sustained earnings and cash flow generation, and reliable crude supply.

PhilRatings describes a company that has been given a PRS Aaa rating as that which "has a very strong capacity to meet its financial commitments relative to that of other Philippine corporations."

PhilRatings said it had assigned the PRS Aaa rating to Petron primarily due to the oil firm's solid market leadership amid a fiercely competitive environment.

It noted how Petron was able to maintain an overall market share of 38 percent in 2005 despite the emergence of aggressive new players since the downstream oil industry was deregulated in 1998, as well as shrinking domestic demand.' ***Abigail L. Ho***

FirstGen, Phinma keen on Tiwi-Makban

FIRST GEN CORP. and the Phinma Group are keen on bidding for the government's 700-megawatt Tiwi-Makban geothermal plants in Albay, Laguna and Batangas provinces, officials of these companies said yesterday.

The Tiwi-Makban complex has also drawn interest from the Ayala Group.

First Gen president Federico Lopez said First Gen had already submitted a letter of intent to the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. The company is planning to participate the bidding for the facility which may be held in April. Lopez said First Gen remained interested in the coal-fired Calaca power plant in Batangas.

Phinma president Ramon del Rosario Jr. said Phinma , through energy unit TransAsia Oil and Development Corp., and two possible partners were considering bidding for the Tiwi-Makban complex.

The Phinma Group earlier said it was also interested in the 193 -megawatt Palinpinon power plant in Negros Oriental, and the 150- MW plant at Bacon-Manito (Bacman) area in Sorsogon province.

The Tiwi-Makban complex is composed of the 275-MW Tiwi power plant in Tiwi, Albay, and the 425.7-MW Makban power facility in Laguna and Batangas provinces. ***Elizabeth L. Sanchez***

No tightening of monetary policies

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS hinted it might not tighten monetary policies in the near term despite an expected rise in inflation due to higher value-added tax rate and further increases in US Federal Reserve rates.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said the Monetary Board, which would hold its next policy rate setting on March 9, would consider the country's economic output in making its decision. However, he cited factors that supported a steady monetary settings.

"Liquidity growth rate is going down and the exchange rate is also strengthening. We'll have to look at real sector trends and activities," Tetangco told reporters at a luncheon held in celebration of the 25th anniversary of AB Capital.

In 2005, the BSP increased its overnight rates by 75 basis points on top of a two-percentage hike in the reserve requirement that mopped up about P30 billion worth of domestic liquidity ***Doris C. Dumlao***

Slower export growth expected

THE BANGKO SENtral ng Pilipinas has proposed the scaling down of the government's export growth target for this year to 8 percent from 10 percent.

It said the original target was too optimistic given the challenges confronting the electronics sector.

The BSP told the Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC) that electronics exports were expected to grow but not at the rate projected by the government.

Electronics account for about 70 percent of the country's total exports.

Quoting the BSP's comments, a source from the DBCC said the central bank was not expecting a substantial expansion of local electronics exports' share in the world market.*Michelle V. Remo*

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TransCo
National Transmission Corporation

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF PROTECTION AND COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT FOR BAUANG SAN ESTEBAN LINE 2 STRINGING PROJECT

Reference No.: PB060213-RM0016/PR No. NWLTLS-06-000015005

1. The *NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORPORATION, Head Office Region* (TRANSCO-HO) through the *2006 Corporate Budget approved by the TransCo Board* intends to apply the sum of *PhP 9,010,000.00* being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the Supply and Delivery of Protection and Communication Equipment for Bauang San Esteban Line 2 Stringing Project Reference No.: PB060213-RM0016/PR No. NWLTLS-06-000015005. Bids received in the excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.
2. The *TRANSCO-HO* now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for the Supply and Delivery of Protection and Communication Equipment for Bauang San Esteban Line 2 Stringing Project. Delivery of GOODS is required *in forty five (45) days*. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents TTB.
3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.
4. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below from March 2, 2006 to March 28, 2006 from 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee in the amount of *Php 1,000.00*. The method of payment will be *Cash*.The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.
5. The *TRANSCO-HO* will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on *March 14, 2006 / 2:00 PM* at the *Admin Conference Room*
6. Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before *March 29, 2006/2:00 PM*. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in any of the following form or an equivalent amount in a freely convertible currency. Late Bids shall not be accepted.

Form of Security	Minimum Amount in % of Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid
1. Cash, certified check, cashier's check manager's check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit (1% of ABC)	PhP 90,100.00
2. Bank guarantee (1.5% of ABC)	PhP 135,150.00
3. Surety bond (2.5% of ABC)	PhP 225,250.00
4. Foreign government guarantee (100% of ABC)	PhP 9,010,000.00

7. Bid opening shall be on *March 29, 2006/2:00 PM* at the *Admin Conference Room same address below*. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders representatives who choose to attend at the address below.
8. The *National Transmission Corporation* reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

National Transmission Corporation, Head Office Region
Mr. Armando N. Ochoa, BAC Chairman
MMD Office, G/F TransCo Main Bldg.
Power Center Complex, BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City.
Tel. No. (632) 9812206 / Fax No. (632) 9228432
Website: www.transco.ph

(Sgd.) ARMANDO N. OCHOA
Chairman, Bids & Awards Committee

(PDI – March 2 & 8, 2006)

> *"No eye has seen. No ear has heard. No mind conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him."*
>
> *1 Corinthians 2:9*

Evangelina Ramos-Robles

has peacefully joined the Lord and her husband **Jose La Rosa Robles** *on February 26, 2006 at the age of 83.*

Her loving children **Roland**, **Lulu** and **Wesley**; daughter-in-law **Evelyn**, grandchild **Angela**, sister **Luz**, relatives and friends request the readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her mortal remains lie at the Nacional Memorial Homes, G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Saturday, March 4, 2006 at Himlayang Pilipino, Quezon City after the 2:00 p.m. Mass.

JORGE VELASQUEZ BUAN

of Arayat, Pampanga

Now rests in the infinite warmth
and embrace of our Lord.
He peacefully joined our Creator
on February 28, 2006 at the age of 72.

His loving wife **Natividad**, children **Bong** and Cecille, **Alex** & Alice, **Beck** & Yeng, **Dhay** & Sandy, **Ana Marie** (†), **Jojo** & Bing, **Astrid**, **Lea** & Wilbur and grandchildren, request the relatives, friends and pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies at San Jose (Mesulo), Arayat, Pampanga.

Interment will take place on Saturday, March 4, 2006, at Arayat Catholic Cemetery after the 9:00 a.m. Mass.

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Child Neurology & Neurosurgery course set March 2-3

THE UP-PGH FACULTY AND ALUMNI OF THE Neurosciences headed by Dr. Leonor Cabral-Lim, in cooperation with the PGH Department of Neurosciences chaired by Dr. Willy Lopez, is organizing its 4th Post Graduate Course, "Neurology in Your Practice: Focus on Child Neurology and Neurosurgery" on March 2-3 at the ballroom of the Pan Pacific Hotel, M. Adriatico St., Manila. Open to all adult and pediatric neurologists, neurosurgeons, pediatricians, family physicians and residents in training, the course's program includes clinical neurology guidelines in traumatic surgery, TB meningitis, cerebral palsy, childhood migraines, special needs of the hyperactive child, movement disorders, febrile seizures and diagnosis and management of brain and spinal tumors in children. Also included in the course are lectures by Drs. Lillian Lee, Myrna Fojas, Marissa Lukban, Marilyn Ortiz and Benilda Sanchez for Pediatric Neurosurgery, and Drs. Gap Legaspi, Eric Legaspi, Ibet Sih, Jose Aguilar for Neurosurgery, workshops on pediatric neurological examination (Dr. Martha Lu-Bolanos), developmental screening (Dr. Alexis Reyes), botulinum toxin injection for spasticity (Dr. Myrna Fojas) and neurosurgery video clinics (Dr. Annabell Chua). Interested parties may contact Ms. Nanet Estolas, tel. nos. 525-4996/0916-3681519 or Department of Neurosciences, PGH 521-8450 local 2405.

SANYO DENKI PHILIPPINES INC.

JOB VACANCIES

We are a manufacturing firm at the Subic Bay Freeport Zone, Philippines. We need the following senior managers to manage and attend to the needs of our production and assembly lines for our FAN MOTORS; UNINTERRUPTIBLE POWER SUPPLY; AND, SERVO MOTORS:

PRODUCTION DEPUTY DIVISION MANAGER

Must have at least 10 years of extensive experience in a manufacturing firm and has a comprehensive knowledge in the production of Fan Motors, Uninterruptible Power Supply and Servo Motors. The job encompasses not only production phase but also the entire processes as well, including quality assurance of finished products and raw materials; purchasing system for production requirements; and, Planning and Process Control. The incumbent must also be knowledgeable in the operation of different production machines and familiar with its maintenance as well.

PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT MANAGER

Must have at least 5 years of comprehensive experience in all processes for the production of Servo Motors. The incumbent must also be knowledgeable in planning and process control for servo motor systems using IZUMI production control software. Successful applicant shall also assume the duties and responsibilities of a Production Control Department in charge in the planning and control for production of Servo Motors.

PRODUCTION ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT MANAGER

Must have at least 5 years extensive work experience in Production Engineering, Facilities Maintenance and Management Information Systems. We expect applicants to have at least a working knowledge of an industrial Robotic course. The work experience should be in the field of maintaining production machines / equipments; facilities including building maintenance; and, computer hardware and software. The bulk of the duties and responsibilities of this Manager is in the repair and maintenance of all the machines and equipment that are being used in the production of fan motors, uninterruptible power supply and servo motors.

All applicants for the above positions should be able to read, write and speak Nihongo.

Interested applicants should send their resume with 2X2 picture and credentials to:

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BLDG. 225, Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority
Subic Bay, Freeport Zone

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BASILIO C. CALANGI

Ex-Mayor - Mabini, Batangas
(Served for 18 years as Mayor)

Born - May 23, 1917

Peacefully joined his Creator
on February 23, 2006
at the age of 88.

Interment will be on Saturday, March 4, 2006, 12:00 noon at Mabini Catholic Cemetery, Mabini, Batangas.

Message of Thanks

We, the family of the late

RAMONA GUECO CONCEPCION
"MONANG"

who passed away on 22 February 2006, wish to thank all those who offered prayers and masses, sent flowers, extended assistance, financial assistance and condoled with us during a most trying moment.

MORE CLASSIFIED ADS ON PAGES A2, A13, A14, A15, B2 & B3

CLASSIFIEDS

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

1. The **Privatization and Management Office ("PMO"), through its Bids and Awards Committee ("BAC")**, intends to procure the services of a financial advisor ("FA") in connection with the privatization of the shares of stock of **Al Amanah Islamic Investment Bank of the Philippines (AAIIBP)** under a success fee arrangement.

   The Approved Budget for the Contract (**"ABC"**) is **FOUR MILLION PESOS (P4M)**, to be paid by the PMO and chargeable against the success fee which shall **not exceed two percent (2%)** of the total sales proceeds from the privatization of the shares of AAIIBP.

The fees for the FA shall be payable as follows:

PHASE	DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES	FEES
I – Valuation	Preparation of valuation report, appraisal, information memorandum and privatization plan	Not to exceed Four Million Pesos (P4M)
II – Implementation	Implementation of the privatization plan, as approved by the Privatization Council	Not to exceed 2% of the total sales proceeds, less the fixed fee paid for the Valuation Phase

2. The PMO now calls for the submission of Letters of Intent ("LOIs") from potential bidders to apply for eligibility and short listing for Financial Advisory Services. Interested FAs must submit their LOIs on or before **6 March 2006 from 9:00 am to 4:00 p.m.**, by hand, to **BAC, Privatization and Management Office, 104 Gamboa St., Legaspi Village, Makati City** and secure the Eligibility Documents and Shortlisting Requirements therefrom for a minimal fee of P5,000.00.

   Applications for eligibility will be evaluated on a non-discretionary "pass/fail" basis. The last day for submission of the accomplished Eligibility Documents and Short Listing Requirements shall be on the date of the **Opening of Eligibility Documents on 10 March 2006; 10:00 a.m.** at the 6th Floor, 104 Gamboa St., Legaspi Village, Makati City. Only those found eligible shall be considered for short listing and only those that are short listed will be entitled to submit bids.

3. The PMO-BAC shall draw up the short list of FAs from those who have submitted LOIs and have been determined as eligible both in accordance with the provisions of Republic Act No. 9184 ("RA 9184)" and its Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A ("IRR-A"). The short list of prospective bidders shall not exceed five (5) FAs. The criteria and rating system for short listing are:
   a. 30% – General experience of the FA, considering both the overall experience of the firm and the individual experience of the principal and key staff, including relevant experience of the principal and key staff from previous employment and privatization experience;
   b. 30% – Experience of the FA in Banking and Financial Institution;
   c. 20% – Qualifications of personnel who may be assigned to the project;
   d. 10% – Dealings of the FA with the GRP;
   e. 10% – Experience in Islamic Banking.

   The passing rate to be short listed is 70%.

4. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures as specified in the IRR-A of RA 9184. In accordance with IRR-A of RA 9184, only bids from short listed FAs will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in the Eligibility Documents to be obtained from the PMO. In accordance with the IRR-A of RA 9184, the contract will only be awarded to the Highest Rated and Responsive Bidder who was determined as such during post-qualification.

   The PMO-BAC shall evaluate bids using the ***Quality-Cost Based Evaluation*** procedure. The criteria and rating system for the evaluation of bids shall be provided in the Instructions to Bidders to be obtained from the PMO.

5. Interested FAs may obtain the eligibility and short listing requirements, and the other bidding documents, from the PMO-BAC at the address given below from Mondays to Fridays, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The deadline for submission of bids from the short listed FAs shall be on **3 April 2006, 10:00 a.m.**

6. The PMO/PMO-BAC reserves the right to reject any and all bids, waive any formality in the bid requirements, declare the bidding a failure, annul the bidding process, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders, and award the contract to the bidder whose bid is most advantageous to the Government.

THE BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
PRIVATIZATION AND MANAGEMENT OFFICE
4th Floor, 104 Gamboa Street,
Legaspi Village, Makati City
Tel. Nos.: 893-1640 / 893-7096 / 817-1103
Fax No.: 893-2290
Website: www.pmo.gov.ph

(Sgd.) **CRISANTA S. LEGASPI**
Deputy Privatization Officer and
Chairperson, PMO-BAC

(PDI–Feb. 24 & March 2, 2006)

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- With at least 2 years experience in secretarial works
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- Ability to work under pressure and with minimum supervision
- Not more than 28 years old, pleasing personality and single.

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GlobeSolutions, GlobeQUEST present roster of services

GLOBE TELECOM AND INNOVE Communications recently convened top companies in the manufacturing and pharmaceutical industries on two separate occasions for a preview of their comprehensive suite of business communication and data solutions. The likes of Unilever, Cemex, Philip Morris, Integrated Microelectronics, Johnson & Johnson, and SAFI & Heinz-UFC were represented among other leading food, non-food and semiconductors as well as electronics companies during the forum for manufacturing companies; while notable industry names such as Unilab, GlaxoSmithKline, Eli-Lilly, Abbott Laboratories, Merck Sharp and Dohme, UCB Philippines, Intermed, Cathay Drug and AstraZeneca were on hand during the forum for pharmaceutical companies.

The head of Globe's enterprise business group, Gil Genio, welcomed the attendees and reaffirmed the power of communications technology as a potent business tool. He stressed that the integrated voice and data solutions offered by GlobeSolutions and GlobeQUEST are easily adaptable to the particular needs of these industries and can effectively be used in many ways to improve productivity.

Solutions manager Paolo Cesar Lacuna introduced GlobeSolutions' line-up of value-added products and services. He discussed the possibilities opened up by enterprise messaging platforms such as TxtConnect and Tracker Corporate Edition, email mobility solutions like MobileMail and BlackBerry, and the total voice and data solution Visibility, which allows seamless connectivity anytime, anywhere. Lacuna further explained how these services can be successfully integrated into every step of the manufacturing and pharmaceutical value chains -- from marketing and sales to customer service, logistics, and human resource management.

On the corporate wireline services end, GlobeQUEST segment manager Ryan Pangilinan presented products and services designed to enable businesses to easily and securely communicate over the different managed networks. These services include: GlobeQUEST Internet Exchange (GIX) -- a broadband Internet network with one of the biggest IP port capacities in the country, Freeway IP and IPL networks -- managed networks from the Philippines to the US, GlobeQUEST C2W (Cebu to the World) - a managed network service linking Cebu directly to the US without having to pass through an international gateway in Manila, and Broadband Access Service (BAX) -- the first in the Philippines to offer a high-speed fiber optic network. Pangilinan also demonstrated how these services enable the manufacturing and pharmaceutical industries to efficiently accomplish their day-to-day operations and boost their business bottomline.

To give the guests a clearer background on these services, business cases were also discussed in both events -- Cemex for the manufacturing companies and Unilab for the pharmaceutical firms. Cement company Cemex implements several GlobeSolutions value-added services - TxtConnect, BlackBerry, Mobile Mail, Visibility, Tracker CE and SFA - and uses GlobeQUEST services to connect its Philippine offices and maintain a reliable link to the head office in Mexico and to 50 other countries. These have contributed immensely to their continued leadership in the building solutions industry. Meanwhile, Unilab, which has been a valued Globe client for many years now, has successfully applied GlobeSolutions and GlobeQUEST services in almost every aspect of their business, enabling them to improve their company's overall performance. They are also looking to expand and strengthen their collaboration with Globe by availing of new services such as the Corporate Ringback Tone, which allows sales personnel to market their brand in a unique and personal way by using it as their phone's ringback tone.

The presentations received positive feedback from the guests, many of whom expressed interest in GlobeSolutions' and GlobeQUEST's business communication and data access solutions. Existing clients of Globe who attended the forums affirmed that the ability to offer a comprehensive package of products and services with applications tailored to their needs has always been the main strength of the company's corporate services arm. Several of these companies have recently renewed or expanded their partnership with Globe for the provision of wireless, wireline, and data solutions and value-added services.

GlobeSolutions provides effective and efficient communication services to address various business needs. For more information, e-mail globesolutions@globetel.com.ph or call the GlobeSolutions hotline at 730-1999. On the other hand, for inquiries about GlobeQUEST services, call the GlobeQUEST hotline at 79-QUEST or e-mail marketing@globequest.com.ph.

HYUNDAI, KIA PROVIDE AID TO LANDSLIDE VICTIMS

Her Excellency President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo accepted, in behalf of the National Disaster Coordinating Council, the amount of $200,000 for a total of P10,000,000, donated by the Hyundai-Kia Automotive Group, the largest car manufacturing group in Korea, at official ceremonies Feb. 23, at the Office of the President of the Republic of the Philippines in Malacañang Palace. At the turnover ceremony were (from left) General Glen Rabonza, Executive Officer of the National Disaster Coordinating Council; Richard Lee, chair, Hyundai Asia Resources Inc; Maria Fe Perez-Agudo, EVP and chief operating officer, Hyundai Asia Resources Inc; Il-sung Seo, general manager and chief of Asia Regional Headquarters, Hyundai Motor Company; President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo; Moon Je Ho, director for regional HQ, Asia and Pacific, Kia Motors; Felix Mabilog, president, Columbian Autocar Corp; and Jeremy Lee, manager asia regional headquarters of Hyundai Motor Company.

BIGGEST MALL TO RISE IN ILOCANDIA

Hawaii Governor Linda Lingle, who was in the country recently to commemorate the centennial of Filipino immigration to Hawaii, took part in the ceremonial groundbreaking ceremonies of the Center, a 20-hectare mixed-use development that will soon rise in metro Laoag located in San Nicolas, Ilocos Norte. The first of its kind in the entire province of Ilocos, the commercial and tourism development center will comprise of the following facilities: a shopping mall with supermarket, four theaters, retail stores, a US franchise 50-room boutique hotel, at least two commercial buildings, a transport terminal, a 24-hour full-service gasoline station with its own retail stores and fast food; and a 20,000-sqm strip mall for bars, restaurants and all-day dining places. For inquiries, call 636-4892 or 634-4906. Lingle was treated to a warm welcome by (from left) San Nicolas Mayor Alfredo Valdez Jr, Laoag City Mayor Michael Farinas, lawyer Hilario P. Valdez, chair, Venvi Development Corp, developer of The Center, visiting friend Linda Ramos, and the Valdez patriarch Alfredo Valdez.

VANNA GARCIA ENDORSES BOARDWALK

Your Fashion, Our Business

Boardwalk, a Filipino owned corporation that engages in the direct-selling and networking business of footwear, apparels, belts, bags and other fashion accessories, announces the renewal of Vanna Garcia as model/endorser, for Boardwalk's young adult collection. Vanna Garcia aptly reflects the youth of today. She's independent, free-spirited and yet she retains her homegrown values that's why she was chosen as Boardwalk's endorser. As shown in the photo are : Lorena Garcia (Vanna's mother); Vanna Garcia, Boardwalk image model; Bea Oranga, events officer, BBN; Marc Javier, BDD-operations development head, BBN; Mariton Ereneta, sales division, BBN and Angel Lumban , executive assistant.

Pascual Lab

PDA, PASCUAL LABORATORIES LAUNCH SENIOR CITIZEN PROGRAM

The Philippine Dental Association and Pascual Laboratories Inc. manufacturer of Betadine Gargle launched Senior Citizen Program at Golden Acres last Jan. 26. The program is to extend a 20 percent discount in all dental services to all Senior Citizen. They just have to present their Senior Citizen I.D. in all PDA accredited Dental Clinics. Shown are (from left): Dr. Roger Lachica (chair- Senior Citizen Program), Dr. Mon Sagultan (co-chair), PDA Fil-Chi president Dr. Norma Chu, Dr. Joy Paez Tiongson, Dr. Bing Capili (PDA San-Juan Chapter president), Dr. Esquillo (PDA president), Pascual Laboratories senior product manager Princess Pascual Fernando, assistant product manager Jennifer B. Ballesil and Dr. Agana.

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ICSEC-KAPLAN, BERLITZ INK MOA

International Cultural Studies and Education Corp. (Icsec-Kaplan), a Kaplan Certified Education Provider of Kaplan Test Prep International Inc (www.kaplan.com), the world leader in Test Preparation for over 60 years, and Berlitz Language Center (www.berlitz.com), which for over 125 years has been teaching English and other languages to millions of people across the globe, have recently signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) making all the Icsec-Kaplan Educational Centers located nationwide (QC, Manila, Makati, Cebu, Iloilo, Baguio, Davao, and Legaspi) official satellite centers for offering the Berlitz language learning programs. Present during the MOA signing were (from left, standing) Fortune De Lara (Language center director, Berlitz Phils), Stewart Fenix (program consultant, Berlitz Phils), Joy Gatmaytan (academic director, Icsec-Kaplan), Ma. Aurora Diaz (CIDD director, Icsec-Kaplan), Erwin Gatchalian (business development director, Icsec-Kaplan) and (from left, seated) Dr. Alfred Tong (partner, Berlitz Phils), Nobuhiko Eto (franchise manager, Asia/Berlitz Int'l), Wilson Go (president, Berlitz Phils), George U. Lim (CEO, Icsec-Kaplan), Catherine Lee-Lim (EVP-operations, Icsec-Kaplan), and Edgar Corbe (executive assistant to the CEO, Icsec-Kaplan).

Ayala Land Premier penetrates Hong Kong market

AYALA LAND RECENTLY ACHIEVED A MAJOR breakthrough in the Asian real estate market by entering the Hong Kong market through its high-end residential projects brand, Ayala Land Premier. Hong Kong, renowned globally for its conservative yet sophisticated consumer tastes, welcomed the entry of One Serendra, Ayala Land Premier's garden residential condominium with the unique proposition of 65 percent greenery and spacious, luxurious units. A showcase of the top-notch development was held late last year at the posh Conrad Hotel in Pacific Place, Queensway.

These events took advantage of the growing trend in the Hong Kong real-estate industry where property exhibitions are frequently held in various top hotels on weekends. "In Hong Kong, hotels would be venues for people to get to know their options in the real estate market," says Jim Ramsay, sales director of Wealth State Consultants, the partner broker firm of Ayala Land Premier tasked to market One Serendra in Hong Kong. "These people know what they want, and they're very discriminating in the sense that they would listen intently to what you have to offer, and ask very intelligent questions after."

The initial wave of exhibition was met with great interest from Hong Kong families and businessmen looking at halfway homes for travel or real-estate investment, proof that One Serendra is at par with international standards. Prospective unit owners were intpduced to world-class suburban community at the heart of Bonifacio Global City, the Philippines' fastest growing business and commercial hub near the renowned and established Makati Central Business District. Among One Serendra's highlights are tree-lined parks, tranquil gardens, spacious curvilinear units, a unique international shopping haven, and recreational facilities of first-class country club standards.

"One Serendra is ideal for people who are looking for a place that's calm and free from disturbance, yet accessible to all the conveniences found in the city," affirms Ramsay. "It's also very luxurious, with generously sized units. It's familiar and comforting to travelers who are used to world-class surroundings."

Known for superior quality developments that serve the discriminating high-end market, Ayala Land Premier's first step in penetrating Hong Kong came through the recommendation of Hong Kong-based Filipino Lucas Abucay Jr. Mr. Abucay was very pleased with his own Ayala Land Premier properties and impressed with the promise of world-class suburban living. As Chief Financial Officer of one of the territory's leading real-estate developers, he convinced a former agent to form Wealth State Consultants as a dedicated sales force to push Serendra to international clientele.

Further plans to strengthen the Ayala Land Premier network in Hong Kong include talks with Filipino organizations and banks operating in the island to target overseas Filipinos, Hong Kong and other foreign nationals who are keen to invest in the Philippines, and a dedicated and more permanent One Serendra showroom at the Elizabeth House in Causeway Bay.

BJ 'TOLITS' FORBES GOES WITH LEONE KIDS

The government's junior ambassador of the Bright Child Program, movie/TV child star BJ 'Tolits' Forbes, very recently signed with Star Paper Corp to endorse their Leone Kids brand of pencil and crayons. The Leone Kids brand is fast gaining wide acceptance and loyalty of parents and schoolchildren nationwide because of its premium quality without the premium price. Shown in photo (seated from left) are Bajing Decena, BJ's talent manager, Annie Forbes, BJ's mother, BJ 'Tolits' Forbes and Romeo Jacinto, Star Paper Corp's PMD general manager. Standing behind them (from left) are Gary Espejo, Star Paper department sales manager, Carlito Viriña, president of Viriña & Viriña, their advertising agency, Jerrel Lopez, Virina & Viriña senior partner and client service head, Jeremy Y. Tan, Star Paper Corp's Senior product manager, Ann Margaret Tan, assistant brand manager, Paul Dennis Oraa, assistant marketing manager and Omar Jose, brand assistant.

Winners of 2nd BPI-DOST Project of the Year Awards announced

THE BANK OF THE PHILIPPINE Islands (BPI) in partnership with the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) recently announced the winners of the second BPI-DOST Science "Best Project of the Year" .

Twelve semi-finalists were chosen from the twenty-nine projects of the 2006 BPI-DOST Science Awardees from 10 universities nationwide. The list was narrowed down to six finalists by BPI-DOST officials. The six finalists presented their research projects before a joint BPI-DOST panel of experts. The six finalists and their respective research projects are as follows: Cherrys Abrigo from the University of the Philippines, Los Lanos – "Evaluation of Oxidant Formation and Ammonia Destruction in Alkalinity-Supplemented Simulated Seawater in A Batch Electrolytic Reactor"; Danve M. Castroverde from University of the Philippines, Diliman - "Molecular Studies on Type Strains Vibrio Campbelili Vibrio harveyi using PolymeRase Chain Reaction and Electroporation"; David P. Peralta from Ateneo de Manila University – "Isolation, Purification and Characterization of a 25-35kDa B-giycosidase from Native Ginger Rhizone (Zingibar officinale Roscoe)"; Maydeline P. Que from University of the Philippines, Diliman – "Portable Logging Apnea Monitor"; Leilani A. Solera from the University of San Carlos – "Bioactivity of two cultured marine sponges Callyspongia aerisoza and Cibrochalina olemda (Prifera: Demosponglae)"; and Varsolo C. Sunio from Ateneo de Manila University – "Holographic Storage and Animation Based on Phase Multiplexing with Self-Assembled Elastomer Phase Mask".

The announcement of the winners and the awards ceremony followed immediately after the presentation. For the "Best Project of the Year" Award, the winner is Christian Danve M.Castroverde; 1st runner up is Maydeline P. Que; and 2nd runner up is David P. Peralta.

For the past 17 years, BPI has been honoring three students from leading universities and colleges with the BPI Science Awards, for their exceptional achievements in their respective science or technology field. The awards are chosen on the basis of their research projects, academic performance and leadership qualities. To date 460 students have been given recognition for their contributions to the industry and nation-building.

BUSINESS

Peza investments up 27.6%

Of the 71 projects listed as of end- February, 15 are in IT

By Ronnel W. Domingo

INVESTMENTS IN EXPORT-ORIENTED projects registered with the Philippine Economic Zone Authority surged 27.6 percent to P8.4 billion in the first two months, the agency reported yesterday.

In the first two months of 2006, locators committed to invest a total of P4.15 billion in 61 projects, while ecozone developers earmarked some P4.3 billion in 10 projects.

Some of the biggest projects include those of economic zone developer Jovima Management and Development—the operation and maintenance of a P115.2-million, seven-story building and a P79.7-million, four-story building.

Also approved during the period were a P34.7-million back office transaction processing operation, a P32-million manufacturing facility for protective tapes and films for liquid crystal displays, and a P24.6-million contact call center.

Peza declined, however, to give further details.

Peza Director General Lilia de Lima said there were 71 projects listed by the end of February, almost double the 37 projects registered in the same period in 2005.

Of the investments committed as of end-February, some P371 million represented 15 information technology projects.

IT investments increased 32 percent from the four projects worth P281 million registered last year.

In the IT sector alone, new jobs generated were expected to reach 8,591 or 693 percent higher than the 1,083 jobs last year.

Trade Secretary Peter B. Favila had announced that projects approved by Peza and the Board of Investments reached a total of P231 billion last year or about 24 percent higher than the P186.3 billion posted in 2004.

Last year's top projects in terms of cost were those of PNOC Petrochemical Development Corp.'s naphtha cracker at P 34.8 billion, JG Summit Petrochemical Corp.'s (also a naphtha cracker) at P 26.2 billion, Cebu Air Inc.'s refleeting at P21.2 billion and Kepco Cebu Corp.'s power project at P15.2 billion.

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Gov't more optimistic on peso vs US dollar

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT IS LOOKING at revising its assumption on the peso to a more optimistic 51 to 53 against the US dollar, from the original target of 55, to reflect the improving fiscal condition and growing dollar reserves.

The local currency breached the 53-to-a-dollar mark early this year, and touched the 51 level despite tension surrounding the declaration of a state of national emergency.

The Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC), a body tasked with setting the government's economic targets, has begun discussions on possible changes to its macroeconomic assumptions for 2006.

A source from the DBCC said the peso-dollar exchange rate was one of the targets that might be adjusted to factor in recent developments.

The DBCC was also looking at revising its inflation target to 7.3-8 percent from the original 8-8.5 percent, as suggested by the BSP.

Some of the macroeconomic targets were set back in 2004 when the government was crafting the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) for 2005 to 2010.

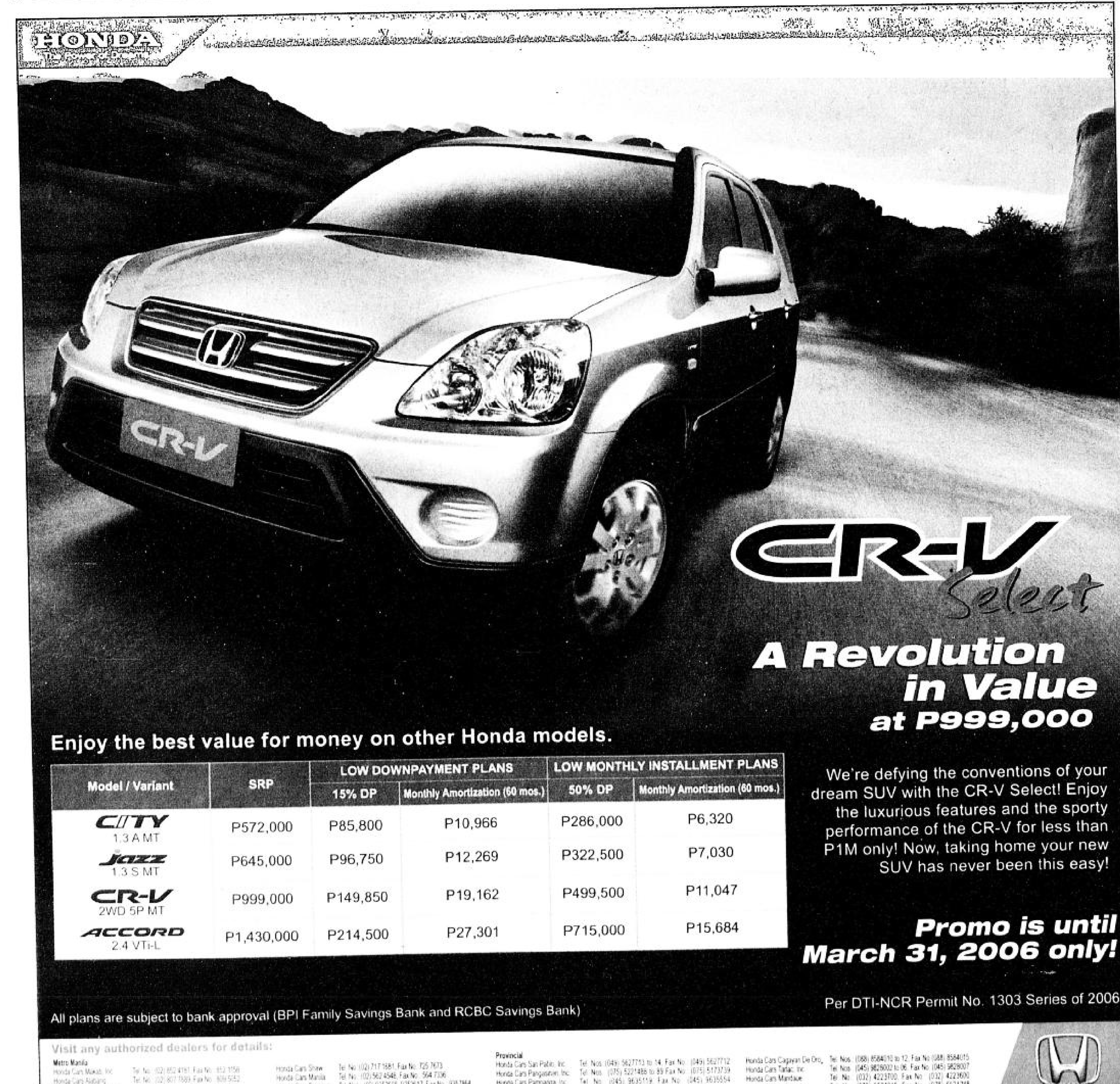
The BSP proposed the revision in the peso target range to 51 to 53, on grounds that dollar inflows from overseas Filipino workers continued to rise.

The BSP had reported that OFW remittances last year reached an all-time high of $10.7 billion, climbing 25 percent from the previous year's figure.

The increase in remittances was partly due to the growing number of Filipinos going abroad.

The increase in dollar inflows from OFWs helped boost the country's gross international reserves to historic highs.

As of January this year, the GIR shot up to its highest level of $20.5 billion.



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War over TV slot heats up

By Daxim L. Lucas

GMA NETWORK INC. yesterday reiterated its claim over one of SKYCable's most watched channel slots, saying the existing channel assignment for its recently launched QTV 11 station was fraught with technical problems.

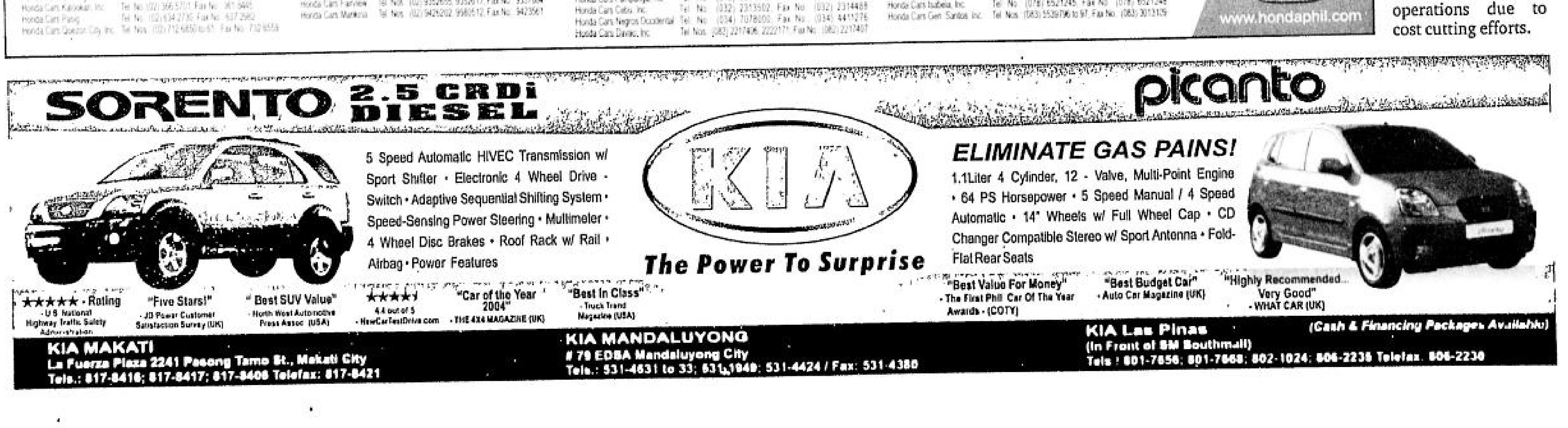
The move—opposed by SKYCable—puts at stake the channel 27 slot, which has long been occupied by the ABS-CBN News Channel, which, like SKYCable, is owned by the Lopez family.

In a telephone interview, GMA's chief operating officer Gilberto Duavit said the network has already submitted its position to the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC), which is expected to release its final ruling in the coming days.

In its petition, GMA pointed out that the existing slot used to broadcast its QTV 11 unit over cable television had technical problems that result in poor picture quality, including the occasional appearance of wavy lines.

Because of this, GMA wants its QTV 11 signal broadcast on another slot, and has specifically requested the Channel 27 slot.

GMA used to broadcast programs for its UHF on Channel 27—a "free to air" channel—until 2001 when it ceased operations due to cost cutting efforts.



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Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso

HALO-HALO is one way to describe Filipino cooking, both refreshing and a mixture of so many influences.
PHOTO COURTESY OF GLENDA BARRETO'S "FLAVORS OF THE PHILIPPINES"

Overseas Filipino wonders: 'halo-halo, sinigang, ukoy'

Food writers Raymond Sokolov and Alan Davidson, even humorist Calvin Trillin, have given Pinoy food delicious reviews

COUNTRY COOKING

Micky Fenix

WHEN ASKED WHY FILIPINO FOOD HAS not broken into the international scene, I usually take a second or two to gather my thoughts before disputing the statement.

Shall I quote famous food writers who say our food is so varied and we eat with so much joy? Shall I talk about people like Glenda Barretto who have made Filipino food such a hit abroad? Shall I point out that, with so many Filipino workers around the world, how can our food not be known?

The famous food writers I constantly meet at work, in my little library of food books, provide me lessons on how to write, and thrill me as well with their conclusions on how good our food is—as good as, maybe even better than, other cuisine.

One of these writers is Raymond Sokolov, author of several food books and once the editor of The Wall Street Journal's Leisure and Arts. He came here to do research on "Why We Eat What We Eat" (Summit Books, 1991), a study of how the encounter between New and Old Worlds changed food cultures.

Wonderful

Before he came, people who used to live and work here, presumably expatriates, told him there was nothing good to eat in the country. He ended up marveling at so many wonders of our cooking, especially our indigenous food, some of them disguised by Spanish names—*adobo, tamales, paella*.

But it was *sinigang* which impressed him. He wrote this paragraph, revealing his high regard for our cooking: "Filipinos do not seem to be much attracted by the extreme flavors and extreme seasonings… They have their own standards, quite wonderfully intricate. But you will miss the point if you are not willing to compare in your mind 20 theoretical ways of making fish taste sour. Into such a mental/sensual framework, the whole of world cuisine can fit and end up Filipino."

Alan Davidson, in his collection of food essays, "A Kipper with My Tea" (Macmillan, 1990), had a chapter on the Filipino food scene which included the variety of cookery books and his amazement at the joy we exuded when we ate.

He wrote that "Filipino food is good, but its perceived merit is increased by a large factor because of this tropical-rejoicing syndrome." For this editor of "The Oxford Companion to Food," that quality was as refreshing as our "mix-mix" of cooked fruits and shaved ice, which was why he called that chapter "Hallo, Halo-Halo."

Calvin Trillin would still be my favorite food writer even if he never wrote anything about our cuisine. But he did. It's not a treatise like Solokov's book and he did not come here to taste our food like Davidson. But, living in New York City, he gets his Filipino food fix.

In "New Grub Streets" (Feeding a Yen, Random House 2003), he mentions Filipino barbecue as one of many ethnic foods he can get on Roosevelt Avenue.

Trillin mentions barbecue again and "fried rice and lo mein and egg rolls and an unusual fritter that was made with vegetables and fried in oil" in "Confessions of a Stand-up Sausage Eater" (Third Helpings, Ticknor and Fields, 1983).

It's not difficult to recognize *sinangag, pancit, ukoy* and *lumpia* from his descriptions. Trillin confesses to "a certain fondness for" *ukoy*, one reason he doesn't mind having non-Italian food booths at an Italian feast.

What puzzles him is why there are so many Filipino food booths, 10 on every block, at food fairs, whether Italian or even Armenian. He considers this "one of those New York ethnic mysteries that outlanders were not meant to understand."

Not even Filipinos who manage those stalls could tell him the reason. For me, it's the Sidcor, Legazpi and Salcedo weekend market syndrome.

Successful

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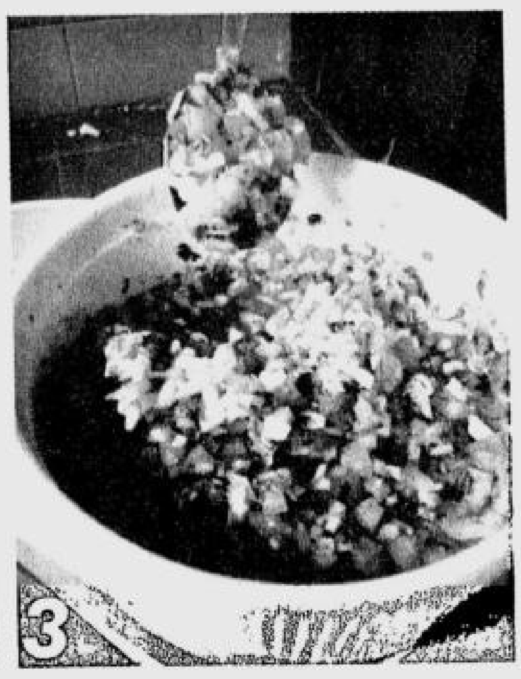
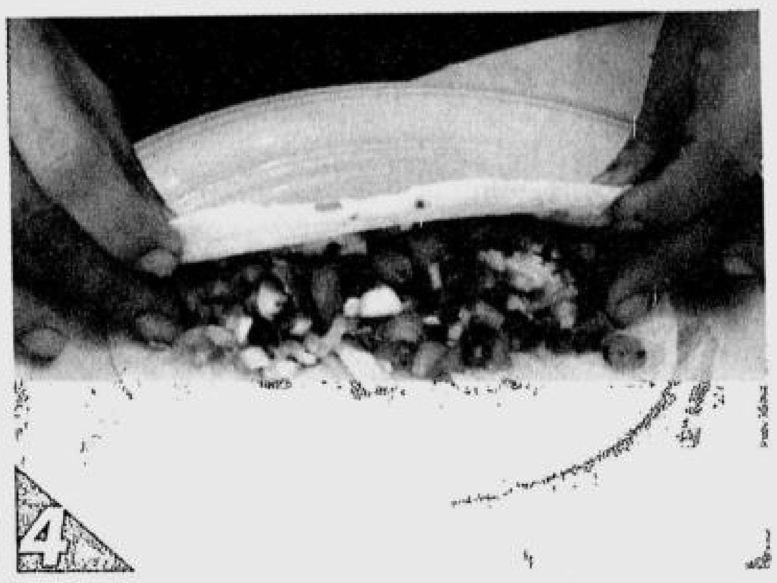
BOIL pork belly in water with salt, peppercorn and garlic until skin can be pinched easily. Remove from fire and drain, cool and air dry. Deep-fry in a deep saucepan until tiny blisters appear on the skin, chop into small pieces. Set aside.

COMBINE all the ingredients of Pico de Gallo in a bowl, cover and chill.



MIX the meat and Pico de Gallo mixture.



WRAP mixture in soft tortilla. Serve with tortilla chips.

STEP BY STEP

Quick, filling snack

TACOS de Carnitas

Text by Vangie Baga-Reyes
Photos by Roger Carpio

YOU WANT A QUICK DELICIOUS snack? A popular Mexican snack, with slices of succulent pork mixed with salsa and wrapped in freshly toasted soft tortilla, will tide you over until lunch or dinner.

Tacos de Carnitas are a favorite snack in Mexico. Carnitas means "little meats."

This recipe uses pork that can be cooked in a variety of styles, crisp or juicy, with bone or without, with red sauce or guacamole, plain or in a tortilla.

The well-browned pork comes in small bits or shreds. Taken from an inexpensive cut of pork, the meat is simmered in water until tender. The meat is then cooked in pork fat until nicely browned all over.

Carnitas are usually eaten with salsa and are sometimes also used as filling for burritos.

In this recipe, Tacos de Carnitas are eaten with fresh Pico de Gallo, a relish made of finely chopped tomato, white onions, jalapeño, cilantro and lime juice.

Marie Vita-Pantoja, who came up with the recipe, has been preparing Tacos de Carnitas since she came home after living in the United States for 10 years.

"I'm a pork eater and when I returned to Manila I terribly missed this Mexican snack. So, I tried to recreate it myself and relive that Mexican roadside taco stand experience," says Pantoja, who runs her own catering business called 4th St. Kitchen specializing in Asian cuisine (tels. 7235773 or 0917-9041264).

Tacos de Carnitas has been one of the most requested dishes in Pantoja's menu.

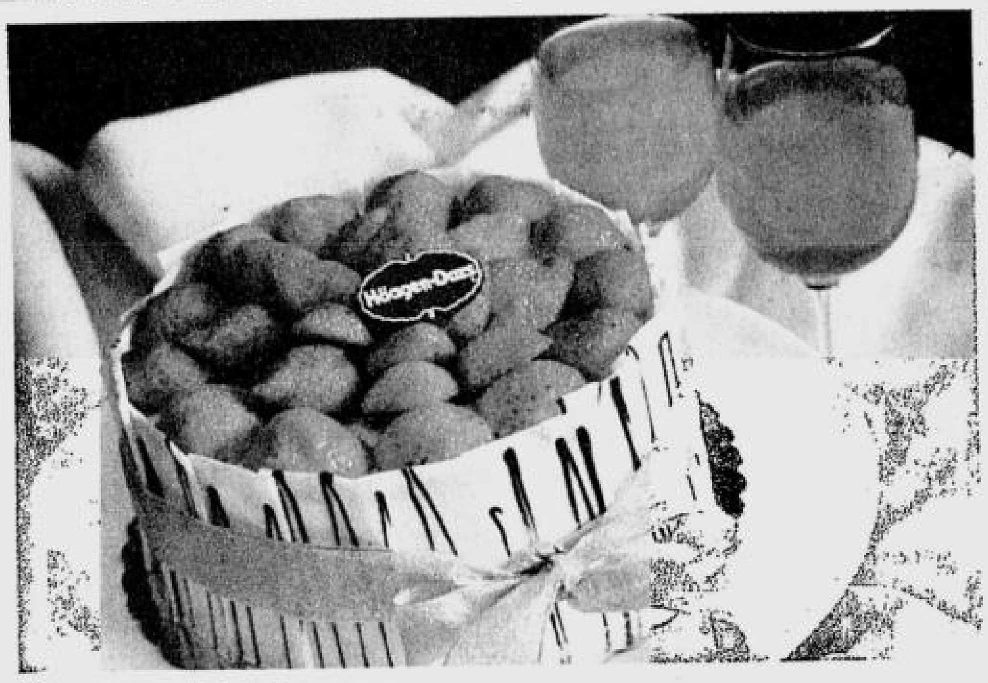
For this recipe, Pantoja prefers to use pork belly or *liempo* for its crisp yet juicy meat. She also uses store-bought soft tortilla which she delicately places on a skillet or in a microwave for a few seconds just before eating.

In parties, it's best to serve Tacos de Carnitas with corn tortilla chips.

Ingredients:
1 kg pork belly (*liempo*) whole
5 c water
2 tbsp salt
8 pcs peppercorn, freshly ground
6 cloves garlic
12-15 pc soft tortilla (store-bought, Village Gourmet)

Pico de Gallo
1 kg tomatoes, diced
½ kg white onions, diced
¼ c fresh jalapeño or *sili pangsigang*, seeded if desired
1/8 kg fresh cilantro (*wansoy*), minced
1 tbsp of lime juice or 6 pcs *calamansi*
Salt to taste

For suggestions, e-mail the author at vbaga@inquirer.com.ph

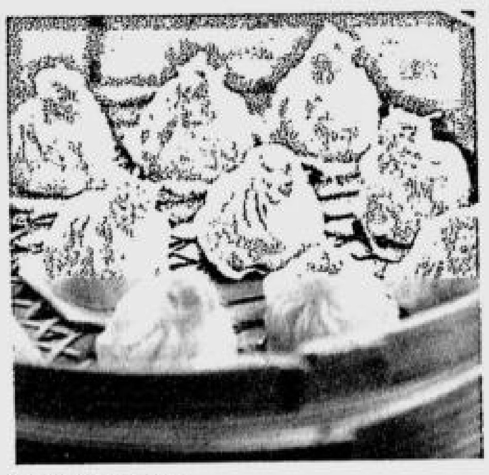


STRAWBERRY Symphony

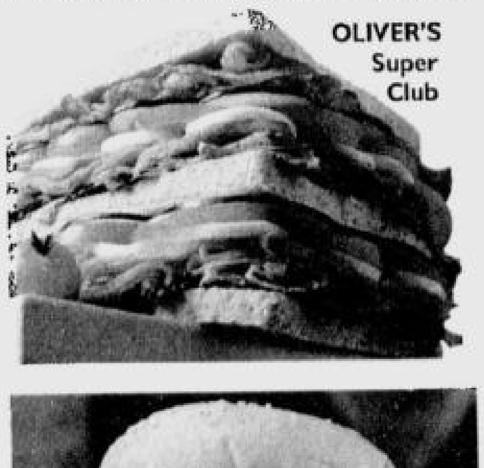
Dining discounts for SIA passengers

HÄAGEN-DAZS, ZHONGNNANHAI (ZNH) Chinese Bistro, Max Brenner Chocolate Bar and Oliver's Super Sandwiches are among the establishments in Manila which have signed up with Singapore Airlines' Boarding Pass Privileges Program, a Gold Award Winner at the Pacific Asia Travel Association Awards 2005.

Dining, shopping and other lifestyle benefits are now available to SIA passengers arriving in Manila on its three daily flights from Singapore who simply show their SIA boarding passes within seven days of their flight.



XIAO Long Bao



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Max Brenner Chocolate Bar offers free ChociShake with any Max Burger; on top of this, Raffles and First Class passengers can also avail of 15-percent discount on all retail products. Oliver's Super Sandwiches offers 20- to 30-percent discounts on Olive Hot Subs. Raffles and First Class passengers gets an additional 15-percent discount on any purchase.

Visit www.singaporeair.com/boarding-pass for a complete list of participating establishments and their offers.

New look for familiar flavors

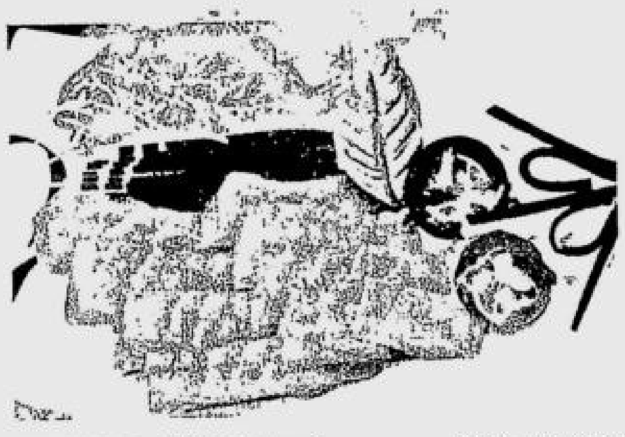
DINING OUT

TIMPLA reinvents Filipino flavors that everyone knows, giving each dish a new twist in the preparation and presentation.

The Sisig Spring Rolls is a new rendering of an old favorite. *Sisig* is put in *lumpia* wrapper and served with a tangy citrus-soy dressing and spicy chili oil. Lumpiang Ubod is served with Japanese crabstick in a garlic-soy reduction while the crunchy Boneless Crispy Pata Roulade is served with three sauces—an onion-garlic soy vinaigrette, hoisin-*lechon* sauce and sweet chili sauce.

Timpla outlets are in 2/F Paseo Center, Paseo de Roxas, Makati (8125395), and G/F, ELJC Bldg., The Loop, ABS-CBN, Mother Ignacia St., Quezon City (4112634).

YOSHINOYA offers Yoshi Bento meals: the ebi tempura, tuna kabayaki and pork tonkatsu. Yoshinoya outlets are at Park Square I in Makati, SM Megamall, Robinsons Galleria, Greenhills Shopping Center and SM City North Edsa.



HYATT Regency Manila offers for lunch and dinner a special a la carte menu of Toro Sashimi, March 13-26. Call 8331234 loc. 8060.

CENTURY Park Hotel's Unsui Japanese Restaurant features Nabe (hotpot) for the whole month of March. You have a choice of Tara Chiri, Suppon, Tori-Mizutake, Shake-Shinjo, Kani-Chiri, Unsui Chanko and Kamosuki. Call 5288888.

HYATT Regency Manila's Café Al Fresco Verandah and the Hyatt Poolside offer Sunday Barbecue Brunch for all Sundays of March. Grilled items like tender lamb chops, tenderloin steak and choice chicken cuts will be available. The Sunday Barbecue Brunch is open 11 a.m.-3 p.m. for P900+ (adult) and P450+ (child). Café Al Fresco also has the Special Seafood Buffet Festival all Fridays of March. Call 8331234.

SULO Hotel serves breakfast meals: Continental, New Yorker and Traditional. The Sushi Bar and Teppanyaki features Yaki Sakana as Dish of the Month. Sulo Hotel is at Matalino Road, Diliman, Quezon City. Call 9245051/71.

KULINARYA Kitchen offers Pork Tenderloin Scallopine, Grilled US Angus Rib Eye Steak, Blackened Tilapia Fillet and Barbecue Shrimps.

Pinoy represents Asia in bartending contest

JOJO "Vanilla Ice" Almanza of TGI Friday's

JOJO "VANILLA ICE" ALmanza of TGI Friday's-Glorietta will represent the Philippines in the TGI Friday's World Bartending Championship on March 5 at the Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas, Nevada, United States.

Almanza was winner in TGI Friday's Philippines' Shake, Rattle and Pour Bartending Championship for two straight years. He represented the country in TGI Friday's Asian Bartending Championship in October in Taiwan.

In Taiwan, he topped the Compulsory Test Drinks Exam, besting participants from the host country, Japan, Korea, China and Malaysia, and became first runner-up.

The two-day World Bartending Championship in Las Vegas brings together the best bartenders from different regions around the globe, as well as the US.

He will undergo written as well as technical tests. Almanza can prepare 200 drinks.

Almanza, who has been a bartender at Friday's Glorietta branch for two years now, got his "Vanilla Ice" moniker from the song "Ice, Ice Baby," the background music for his first bartending performance. He is the second bartender of Friday's Philippines to bring honor to the country.

Ronald "Wonder Boy" Valencia was champion in the Asian Bartending Contest and placed second in the World Bartending Championship in Dallas, Texas, in 1999.

Limited-edition coffee now available

GIONNA Cabrera

NESCAFÉ CLASSIC FIRST PICK, which is now in the market, will be available for a limited time only.

The first-pick cherries used in the unique coffee are special and not available all-year round.

The cherries are handpicked with care by Filipino farmers during the beginning of the harvest season.

Coffee connoisseurs know that first-pick coffee cherries have a fresher taste. With the special and unique roasting process used by Nescafé, the Nescafé Classic First Pick is able to bring out and enhance the fresh taste and aroma.

Among those who welcomed the arrival in the market of the limited-edition special coffee were Uniprom Inc. corporate relations director Gus de Castro, 2005 Bb. Pilipinas-Universe and model Gionna Cabrera, and neurologist-professor Dr. Vicente Rosales Jr.

The Nescafé Classic First Pick is now available in supermarkets nationwide.

Start 'em young

By Linda B. Bolido

CONSUMERS WHO WANT TO KNOW WHAT their rights are and where and how to file their complaints should tune in to the Department of Trade and Industry's radio program, "Konsyumer Atbp."

The consumer education program, aired in collaboration with the Philippine Product Safety and Quality Foundation, an organization of local industry associations that promotes product safety and quality by raising product standard consciousness among consumers; Department of Education and ABS-CBN, celebrated its first anniversary recently with a special remote broadcast from the Eusebio High School in Pasig City.

"Konsyumer Atbp." airs 10-11:30 a.m., every Saturday on dzMM 630 kHz. It has five segments: "Batas ng Konsyumer," "Bantay Bilihin," "Consumer 101: School on the Air," "Strictly Pinoy" and "Ugnayang Konsyumer."

Trade Undersecretary for Consumer Welfare Zenaida Cuison Maglaya said students were an important target audience because the education of consumers had to start early.

"Young people have a tremendous influence on the buying habits of their parents," Maglaya said.

PLDT acts

Meanwhile, Horace Lavides, media senior manager of the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company (PLDT), said Elisa Hain, who has been waiting for the printer that she was supposed to receive as a new subscriber of the company's Vibe Plan promo, should be getting the item soon. Lavides said he checked with PLDT and was told it was to be delivered to her residence.

He would appreciate feedback from the customer.

Lavides also promised to look into a question raised by another customer, who read the experience of Erwin Oliva (Jan. 23), who availed of the broadband service. The reader said the story "confused me. I recently called PLDT to apply for the Internet dial-up account with phone service, and they told me that it cost P999 a month with a one-year lock-in period. Quite a difference from the P840 mentioned in your article and Erwin Oliva's."

Grateful

PLDT subscriber Jessica Estrella, on the other hand, says thanks for the prompt action on her complaint.

She wrote earlier, "*Telesulit* subscribers *po kami* and we have not had any service since Friday evening (Feb. 3). PLDT said they're still fixing the problem."

The complaint was forwarded to PLDT on Feb. 7 and the problem was fixed the day after.

E-mail the writer at lbolido@inquirer.com.ph

THE CONSUMER

(Our regular consumer columnist, Marietta V. Giron, is currently indisposed. So, in the meantime, please send letters to Consumer Corner, Lifestyle Section, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Mascardo and Yague Sts., Makati City; PO Box 2353 Makati Central Post Office, 1263 Makati; or e-mail lbolido@inquirer.com.ph ***—Editor)***

The Maya Kitchen
CULINARY ARTS CENTER

Cooking Classes on Meat Processing; Coffee Basic 101, Bartending plus...

Check out Maya Kitchen's best kept culinary secret on its first extensive evening courses program on Entrepreneurship and celebrate the zest & flavors of other regular hands-on cooking classes.

Pasta Cooking: Mar. 4 (Sat) 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Lasagna, Carbonara Pasta, Putanesca, Cannelloni with White sauce, Aglio Olio Pasta Bonus: Homemade flavored pasta. P800

Meat Processing Series: Non-preservatives/organic by Ms. Lourdes Rivera, "Guru" of Meat Processing. **Basic Processed Meats, Mar. 8 (Wed) 5-8 p.m.** Bacon, Ham, Tocino (3 variants: spicy, strips, tosilog), Corned beef, Tapa. P800; **Low cost rice toppings, Mar. 15 (Wed) 5-8 p.m.** Siomai, Embutido, Spicy wings, Sisig, Hamburger & BBQ. P800; **Sausage making, Mar. 22 (Wed) 5-8 p.m.** Vigan & Lucban longaniza, Smoked longaniza, Skinless, Native, Chorizo de Bilboa. P800

Coffee Basic 101: Key factors for a success coffee March 8 & 15 Wed. (5-8pm) Coverage: Coffee history, coffee process, Trouble shooting, coffee blend, Machine know-how-proper grinding. Techniques to perfect froth. Actual preparation of popular Traditional Hot Coffee Concoction: Espresso, Doppio, Cappuccino, Latte, Macchiatto; Cold Coffee Concoction: Millennium Kahlua, Milano mocca, Coffee spin, Caffe affogato, Italian Ice coffee. Free snacks. P2,000

Bartender Basic: (setting up a bar w/ workshop & wine tasting) March 22 (Wed.) 5-8p.m. Coverage: Basic tools, equipment & supplies standard measurements, types of glasses, garnish, classification of wine, spirits & liquors. Workshop sampling & tasting of: Classic Margarita, Flavored Martini, Brandy, Tequila, Whisky, Rhum, Liquor concoctions. Free pulutan. P1,000

Chinese Dimsum: Mar. 25 (Sat.) 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Pork Dumpling, Vegetable dumpling, Chicken feet, Kikiam, Fish balls, Siopao-Cuapao, Buchi. P800

CERTIFICATE COURSES WITH HANDS-ON (Limited enrolment, Pre-registration required)

Basic Cake Design: March 11 & 18 (Sat) 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Fundamentals of cake decorating; coloring, designing, template, icing (boiled, caramel, chocolate, sugar, icing); basic borders, jelly lettering, basic flowers including bunching techniques, individual workshop on icing application and cake designing. P3,000

Basic Culinary: March 7-10/March 21-24/April 4-7 (T-F) 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. Proper hygiene, sanitation and safety; nutrition and nutritional cooking; proper mis-en-place of mirepoix, stocks, soups, sauces, marinades, use of herbs and spices combinations, proper purchasing, storage, techniques of disjointing and boning poultry, filleting fish and meat fabrication. With actual preparation of dishes from appetizer, salad eggs, pasta, seafoods, poultry and meats, dessert including garnishing for plate presentation. Free Mix & Match cookbook. P5,000.

Fundamentals of Bakery Production: March 14-17/March 28-31/April 18-21 (T-F) 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Standard baking techniques applicable to baking application on the use of ready mixes, yeast bread, quick breads, pies, cookies and cakes. P4,000

For inquiries, visit the Maya Kitchen (Tuesdays thru Saturdays) at 8th floor, Liberty Building, A. Arnaiz Ave. (Pasay Road), Makati City or call tel. 892-1185 or 892-5011 loc. 108; or e-mail us at *mkitchen@ultimate.info.com.ph*

Mind your manners . . .

From page C4

- Happy birthday, Ed! Quimson's Kitchen Delights now accepts food orders. He recommends Paella Catalana, Iberian Chicken and Lengua de Gato. Call 8188077.
- J. Gamboa just opened a Milkyway Branch in Virra Mall. Congratulations!
- Toffeefay—gooey toffee bars! So rich, fattening and cheap! Call 5251648/6717606.
- My new cooking class schedules are out including "Manang's Ready to Party," Part 3 of the Gourmet Cucinera Series, for household help and for the novice gourmet cook, with a class devoted particularly to table setting. And, "Diego Mio," whimsical summer cooking for kids. Call 9289296/6335162.
- For those in the provinces or overseas, call Joel Luna at 4371316 for your copies of "Kitchen Rescue," Vol. 1. Books are mailed directly to you!

E-mail the author raspiras@inquirer.com.ph

Overseas . . .

From page C1

po in 1992, it was reported that the Moroccan and the Philippine restaurants were top favorites. Last year, Barretto did it again at the Nagoya Expo.

One reason for the popularity of our food at international exhibitions could be Barretto's presentation. With coconut as the theme of the Filipino booth, she served mainly food using our most versatile ingredient.

Tinolang manok was placed in small coconuts of uniform size, the top covered with pastry. The coconuts were then put in an oven. When the crust was opened, steam would escape, a hot and exciting prelude to the light, tasty chicken soup.

Barretto also devised a new way with *lumpiang* Shanghai. Her *lumpia* were extra long pieces, three in one order. The *lumpia* were placed in paper containers with three holes. People went all over the Expo holding the *lumpia*, she said.

She renamed it Lumpiang Binondo because she didn't want to give Shanghai free advertisement. An Australian, however, almost gave the game away when he told her it was really Lumpiang Shanghai. But she said the *lumpia* was different because she added *buko* to the mix.

And so now we come to the many Filipino workers and migrants all over the world. Think of the *yayas* who will introduce their *alaga* to *adobo* and *sinigang*, exposing young palates to a different cuisine.

In Hong Kong, on their day off, Filipino domestics invited us to a streetside lunch which included rice and *alimasag* complete with vinegar dip. And, in Alaska, Filipinos made sure the heads of the fish we caught ended up as *sinigang*, flavored by powdered souring broth bought from the supermarket.

Of course, I understand that breaking into the international scene also means having several restaurants all over the world, like the Thais and Vietnamese. But we have been working on that, too. A group of restaurateurs and Filipino food promoters has been choosing dishes to promote abroad. Called Kulinarya, the group has pared the menu to about 40 dishes and are now working on the recipes.

The groundwork has been done. It's slow work but we are getting there.

E-mail the author at pinoyfood04@yahoo.com

Fiesta Market
Fountain Area
When you see this.
Street Market
Make a right
Go Left.
From the Fountain Area
Past the corner are hearty deli treats from all over.
BAND PLAYS AT 7-8PM
Looking for culinary delights? Street Market is sure to surprise.
Dine in. Tune in.
Continue along this lane.
HAP CHAN
A hefty serving of Oriental delights await
SOO RA SANG
HEAVEN & EGGS
and cooked.
VIETNAM FOODHOUSE
for eggs uncooked,
for you to eat your heart out.
Make a right
MARKET! MARKET!
The fun is in the finds

Market! Market! is in Bonifacio Global City. For inquiries, call Customer Service Hotline at 886-7519.

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Mind your manners but be yourself

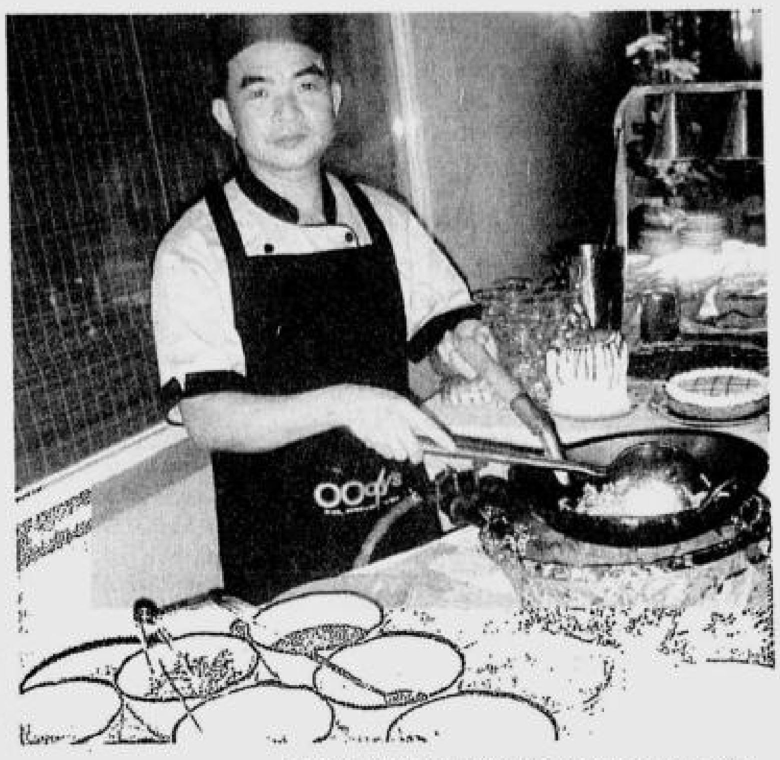
> The rule on the use of cutlery is out moving in, meaning, the outer ones are used for the first dish and so on

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

ENTERTAINING CAN BE EITHER A MOST relaxing or a most grueling experience. But it really should be more the former than the latter because of all the comforts that chefs, restaurants and caterers can provide you in this day and age.

If you're having a party, let Thai chef Thea set up his phad thai station for you and cook the famous rice noodles before your very eyes. What a treat! Remember, since it's a make-your-own phad thai station, put a lot of sauce! Contact Flor Villote, 0920-9047459 or 0922-8784579.



SAWASDEE Ka! Chef Thea greets you as he flips his phad thai noodles.

I am Anna and I'm about to meet the parents of my boyfriend for the first time. My boyfriend is from a prominent family and that makes me nervous. Please give me tips on proper table manners.

Let me see if I remember my manners...

- Sit up straight.
- As soon as you sit, put your napkin on your lap.
- Hold your utensils properly—spoons and forks are held horizontally by three fingers: the middle finger by the first knuckle, the index finger, and the thumb which rests by the fork or spoon's handle. The knife held by the thumb and middle finger with the index finger gently pointed, pressing outwards over the top of the blade to guiding as you cut.
- If uncertain about how to use glasses, utensils, watch and learn from those around you. (One of my dad's guests once drank from a finger bowl!)
- If there are a lot of forks, spoons and knives in front of you, the rule is out moving in, meaning, the outer ones are used for the first dish and so on.
- Do not take the first bite. Your cue is when other people in your table, or the host/hostess have started.
- Never rest your elbows on the table. In between bites, rest your hands on your lap or rest your elbows on the table's edge.
- Taste your food before adding salt and pepper.
- Do not overstuff your plate with food.
- Your glass is to the right and your bread to the left! Do not eat from the bread plate of your boyfriend's mom nor drink from the glass of his dad!
- Wipe your mouth before you take a sip, no one likes to look at a lip-smudged glass.
- Eat bread by breaking them into small pieces. Do not put in your mouth whole!
- If you can't handle a drink, don't!
- Chew with your mouth closed. No sound effects, funny noises slurping or burping!
- Food stuck between your teeth should be discreetly taken off with the tongue. Don't do the teeth vacuum! If that doesn't work, leave the table and do it in private!
- If you are stuck with a tough piece of meat, please do not spit it out on your napkin. Considering that you are trying to impress, close your eyes and swallow it! Hahaha! Or if you must, stand up and excuse yourself to expel the meat privately.
- Never leave the table before the meal is done. If you must, excuse yourself.
- Stick to safe subjects of conversation during the meal.
- If you find a piece of bone in your mouth, remove it using the same utensil it went in with, putting the bone on the edge of the plate.
- Do not overreach for things. Politely ask for it to be passed to you.
- Do not, under any circumstance, make *baon*!

Anna, just be yourself. They will like you best that way! As long as you greet them separately by saying, "Good evening, ma'am! Good evening, sir!" and not "Good evening, ma'am, sir!" (hahaha!), then you're off to a grand start! The best of luck, my dear!

Summer is coming and mangoes will be in season. Can I have a recipe for making preserved green mango? I've tasted some in exhibits and I can't believe that it can be crunchy even when preserved.

VIRGIE

Preserved green mangoes

- Slice 1 k green mangoes, arrange in a bottle.
- In a bowl, mix 1 c rock salt with 5 c water until salt is dissolved.
- Pour salt solution over mangoes.
- Refrigerate for two days.
- Drain salt solution from mangoes.
- Bring 1 ½-2 c of sugar with 4 c to a boil to make syrup.
- Cook syrup and cool.
- Pour over mangoes.
- Refrigerate three days before serving.

Odds and ends

- Rotisseries at bargain prices! Roasts 25 chickens at a time. Darwin Lacerna of the Roaster's Chicken chain in Isabela took the saying "cheaper by the dozen" to an extreme! So he's disposing of some units. Contact 0917-5741178.
- Tarta de Madrid—it's been a while since I've had this! Gene Gonzales' is flaky with loads of Bavarian cream. Call 3732789.

MIND/ C3

I saw our in-store display without seeing the store

Allen Bacallan of General Milling Corporation is one of many other Globe users who were the first to experience the power of Globe 3G since January. He cites the usefulness of video sharing for his company.

"Show me the product, show me the display."

From his office at the Export Bank Plaza, he asked one of his staff members to call him from the convenience store nearby to do an impromptu trade check. Through their Globe 3G phones, he was able to see how his products were displayed on the store's shelves as well as the inventory. But more importantly, he was able to check whether they stood out against the competing brands on the same shelves. They did.

"I got the information I needed right on time."

This February, Allen arrived early for a meeting at the Shangri-La Hotel. While waiting for the meeting to start, he watched the latest news from ANC on his phone. Thanks to Globe 3G video streaming, he got up-to-the-minute prices of commodities just in time for the meeting.

3G

The faster transmission speeds and higher bandwidth of Globe 3G open a lot of doors for new and innovative services that help you in making more informed decisions faster. In addition to video sharing and video streaming, you also have video calling that lets you see and hear who you are talking to as well as fast browsing and even faster downloads for internet surfing and downloading at DSL speeds.

ABS-CBN INTERACTIVE GMA

Of course, it's not always work for Allen. When stuck in traffic on the way home, he watches his favorite TV shows on ABS-CBN and GMA. Sometimes, he browses through his favorite websites which range from CNN News to palmjokes.com.

"Akala rin nila expert ako sa wine."

Once, when Allen went out for dinner with his friends, they thought he was sending out a text message when he was actually connecting to bbr.com. So when it came time to order wine, he didn't just recommend the best region, but the best vintage as well.

"When Globe first introduced text messaging, they set a new standard in communication. With 3G, they continue to raise the bar. I'm impressed."

As the leader in mobile innovation, Globe continues to be committed in making great things possible and enriching the lives of the Filipino people.

sa Globe posible